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Volume XV June, 1976

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: THE HOME FRONT

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THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: THE HOME FRONT

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FOREWORD

This volume continues the precedent of utilizing the services of a volume editor working under the loose supervision of a general editor, a policy initiated with the 1973 issue of *Studies in the Social Sciences*. Responsibility for selecting the theme of the present volume, the papers herein included, and initial editorial refinement was that of the volume editor. The role of the general editor was limited to broad consultation with the volume editor, final editing, and liaison with the printer.

Volume topics for the past four issues of *Studies* have rotated among various social science disciplines. This year the choice devolved on West Georgia College's History Department, which selected a Bicentennial theme permitting historical exploration of the home front during the American Revolution. Clearly, on this our country's 200th year, a retrospective look at facets of this complex and critical topic ensures the timeliness of this issue.

As in the past, this journal is financed partially by The University System of Georgia. It is distributed gratis to libraries of state supported colleges and universities in Georgia and to selected institutions of higher learning in each southern state. Interested individuals or libraries may purchase copies for $3.00 each to help defray printing and mailing costs. Standing orders for the series are available at reduced rates.

It is with considerable pleasure that we submit to you this Bicentennial volume.

John C. Upchurch
Associate Professor and Chairman
Department of Geography
General Editor

PREFACE

The American struggle to separate from Great Britain has provoked two general lines of historical inquiry. Some historians have concerned themselves with the origins of the War for Independence. Other scholars have been more interested in the nature of the American Revolution, that is, in the change—or lack of change—which occurred in American life during the War for Independence.

The question of internal change during the Revolution was not seriously considered until early in this century. Then scholars of the so-called "Progressive" persuasion concluded that the independence movement originated in a deep-seated class conflict between the lower economic orders and the more affluent strata of colonial society. The less privileged classes, primarily small farmers and artisans, sought not only independence but a thorough transformation of American society, including the democratization of the new nation. America endured considerable change, in the viewpoint of the "Progressives," before the Constitution of 1787—a counter-revolutionary document skillfully designed to nullify the Revolution—restricted the powers of the real revolutionaries.

By mid-century that interpretation had come under serious challenge from scholars of the "consensus" inclination. These writers discerned cleavages in colonial society, but they suggested that the schisms were seldom of a class nature; furthermore, the divisions played little role in provoking the rebellion. The result, these historians suggested, was a conservative revolution, an insurrection to preserve what existed—and what was thought to be endangered by departures in traditional British policy—rather than an upheaval for the purpose of provoking substantive change.

In recent years the most important study to appear on the topic—clearly as important for this generation as were the works of Carl Becker or Arthur Meier Schlesinger for an earlier generation—has been Bernard Bailyn's *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Harvard University Press, 1967). Although essentially "consensus" in outlook, Bailyn acknowledged that the American home-front underwent notable modifications during the Revolution. The revolt, he maintained, arose out of the colonists' world-view. By the 1760s-1770s the colonists had come to see themselves as different from Europeans. These differences, arising from the peculiar nature of New World society, were thought to be jeopardized by a British onslaught. The revolution, in part, therefore, was the institutionalization of the American way of life which had awkwardly emerged during the previous several decades. But, Bailyn added, the Revolu-

tion was greater than the sudden realization of American society: the turbulent events of the era comingled with the ideology of the rebellious to catapult the insurgents—after 1776—into "unfamiliar directions, toward conclusions they could not themselves clearly perceive." (pg. 161) The War for Independence, therefore, resulted in a salient, if unplanned, transformation of the home front.

This issue of the *Studies* does not claim to systematically investigate the terribly complex question: how revolutionary was the American Revolution? Instead, it is a compilation of essays which explore the multifaceted nature of the domestic society and institutions during, and, in some instances, after the rebellion. No attempt was made to publish a "Progressive" or "Consensus" issue. By design, the contributors are a disparate group, including scholars of varied persuasions, age, sex, and region. The one common link is that the essayists, in previous works, have established deserved reputations of competence and ability in the areas they are scrutinizing in these pages. The result, hopefully, is a compendium of gainful and provocative views on the issues which concerned those who inhabited the home front during the War for Independence.

A personal word of gratitude is in order for Ms. Vicki Ward and Ms. Eva-Marie Roswall, assistants who have typed draft after draft of manuscripts during the past several months.

John E. Ferling
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Volume Editor

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SOUTHERN SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND THE AMERICAN WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE

By
James A. Henretta

When the thirteen English colonies in North America took up arms against the British Crown at Lexington and Concord in 1775, the entire Western Hemisphere was under the effective political control of European imperial powers. Half a century later, at the time of the deaths of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams—simultaneously and symbolically on July 4, 1826—the situation was far different. The successful achievement of American independence in 1783 had been followed by anti-colonial uprisings in Santo Domingo during the opening years of the French Revolution and subsequently in nearly all of Latin America. Within the lifetime of the American revolutionary generation most of the inhabitants of two continents had achieved a status of political self-determination; only Canada and various Caribbean islands and coastal enclaves to the south of the United States remained as relatively unimportant residues of the old trans-Atlantic imperial systems. Here, then, was the first massive decolonization movement in modern history, a phenomenon that was not to be repeated until the middle of the twentieth century when the continents of Asia and Africa were to assert their freedom from European political domination.

This massive convergence of anti-colonial rebellions, in the eighteenth no less than in the twentieth century, demands explanation. Was it the *example* of India in 1947 and China in 1949 or of the United States in 1776 which spurred other colonial peoples to throw off the imperial masters? Or were there pervasive structural weaknesses in these empires, inherent flaws which made possible continent-wide movements for political liberation? The question is an important one, for it forces a consideration of the causation of these anti-colonial movements and requires that the American revolutionary experience be placed in a wider hemispheric perspective.

The vocabulary of the twentieth century and modern models of revolution have accustomed us to assume that the dynamism which produces political violence originates from below. But such formulations, stemming from the French experience in 1789 and the Russian example of 1917, are based on historical cases in which previously disadvantaged groups overthrew the constituted basis of the society and seized power for themselves. Most rebellions in early modern history—in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and in the various American colonies at the end of the eight-

eenth century—proceeded from quite different causes. In these instances the initial impetus for change did not come from *within* the society, from its lower or disadvantaged orders, but from without; almost invariably these rebellions stemmed from the attempt of a central government or an imperial power to extend its political control or to increase its financial demands upon an outlying province or colony.[1]

There is no better example of this process than the American movement for independence. Before 1765 the inhabitants of the British colonies in North America were loyal, if somewhat uncooperative, subjects of the Crown. For three generations they had accepted the restrictions imposed by the Laws of Trade and Navigation—or at least those regulations which did not impinge too directly on their own self-interest—and they had prospered. Then, beginning in the 1760's, the British King and Parliament undertook a sustained campaign to regulate more closely the course of American trade, to impose strict administrative controls and, most importantly, to increase imperial revenues. It was this series of tax and money bills—the Revenue Act of 1762, the Sugar and Currency Acts of 1764, the Stamp Act of 1765, then the Townshend Duties of 1767 and the Tea Act of 1773—which gradually undermined the traditional allegiance of the privileged groups within American society.

In less than a dozen years faint protests led to concerted resistance, to riots, and—ultimately—to rebellion. Rhetoric of this revolt was rich in metaphors of dependence, of an intense fear of an infringement on personal autonomy and freedom. "The merchants in England look upon us in this part of the world as their Slaves," Edward Shippen, a Pennsylvania merchant wrote to a friend in 1774; they say that

> it is our duty to work for them. And while we the white and black Servants send the Merchants Gold and Silver and . . . Spirits, Sugar, and Mollasses & c . . . so that they may take their pleasure and role about in Couches, they are well enough satisfied.[2]

Such apprehensions of a conspiracy instigated by the King's ministers and designed to reduce America to complete subordination were pervasive among the Patriot leadership. Jefferson thought that England had laid "a deliberate and systematical plan of reducing us to slavery," while Alexander Hamilton claimed that "the system of slavery fabricated against America is the offspring of mature deliberation."[3]

It is obvious that many Americans feared a British assault upon

their traditional liberties but that such subjective views fully comprehended the rationale and the complexities of British intentions is less apparent. In 1763, Britain had just emerged from a long and debilitating war with France, a struggle in which the American colonists had participated directly in the conquest of Canada. This victory had been puchased at a high price. The expenses of war, including generous military subsidies to colonial governments, had exhausted the British Treasury. It was the enormous size of the national debt—over £ 130 million—which was a prime factor in the British decision to bring the colonies under more effective control.[4]

These new demands of the British government constituted the proximate cause of the American War for Independence. War had led to financial distress and to increased fiscal demands upon the colonies. But the strain placed upon the fragile bonds of the trans-Atlantic connection was too great; as in many peripheral areas a distinct and partially autonomous society had appeared in British North America and its inhabitants were extremely sensitive to any infringement, real or imagined, of their traditional laws and institutions. The dynamism from without—the concerted Crown attempts to extend the authority of the central government—first elicited passive resistance in the form of non-compliance with the Stamp Act and a refusal to purchase British goods in the Non-Importation Agreements, and then to civil war within the far-flung Empire.

A second structural weakness—in addition to the inherently fragile link between metropolis and periphery—determined the outcome of this conflict. Most rebellions in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were eventually crushed by the central governments, as limited local resources dwindled away under sustained pressure. But the colonial revolts which took place between 1775 and 1825 were another matter altogether. Given their geographic isolation, the American colonies were partially immune from the central power; and this inherent advantage was enormously accentuated by diplomatic and military conflicts among the European nations. Soon after the outbreak of fighting in America in 1775 the French government secretly sent money and arms to the colonists, and by 1778 France had entered into a formal military alliance with rebellious Americans. It was this assistance which guaranteed the American achievement of independence and prevented either a compromise political settlement or a complete destruction of the Patriot movement.

Seen in this light, the success of the anti-colonial revolts of the late eighteenth century was the result, in large measure, of the temporary breakdown of the European diplomatic system. The increasingly disruptive struggles among France and England and Spain, begin-

ning in 1754 with the French and Indian War and terminating only with the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, caused each of the imperial powers to impose greater financial burdens on their colonial dependencies, just at the time that their own preoccupation with military affairs at home made the effective implementation of those policies difficult, if not impossible. These bitter divisions, moreover, permitted aspiring colonists to play one European power off against another. French assistance to the United States was subsequently repaid in full by the British, who successfully encouraged Latin American independence movements directed against Spain, the traditional ally of France. The parallel with the events of the twentieth century—the devastating wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945 which undermined the financial, military, and psychological strength of the European powers and made it impossible for them to continue their imperial domination of the continents of Africa and Asia—is readily apparent. In both periods protracted military conflicts among the metropolitan imperial powers permitted and, indeed, often encouraged revolt in the peripheral colonial dependencies.

Such a favorable structural situation neither made an independence movement inevitable nor determined its course. Developments on the home front, therefore, were of crucial significance in the creation of the new American republic which emerged in 1776. In the South the Patriot leadership was assumed by those who were prominent in the production (or, in the case of the South Carolina merchants, in the marketing) of the staple crops of rice and tobacco. Disadvantaged or oppressed groups within the society—landless whites and enslaved blacks—played a strictly subordinate role; and the same was true, for the most part, of that part of the white population engaged in diversified agriculture. This split between rich and poor, between commercially-oriented and semi-subsistence groups, stemmed from a variety of factors. Wealthy planters had traditionally controlled southern politics, and so it was only to be expected that they would take control of the anti-imperial movement. Moreover, the new British measures bore most directly on those engaged in foreign commerce, a sector of the population which had the most to lose from the imposition of imperial taxes and which was heavily in debt to British merchants.[5] Such individuals reacted instinctively when it appeared that their private debts would be compounded by public taxes.

Conversely, settlers in the backcountry of Georgia and the Carolinas, and even in parts of Virginia, had only a tenuous relationship to the British economy; their economic well-being depended more on the labor of their own hands than on the success or failure of the new imperial legislation. The Proclamation Line of 1763, which restricted

emigration further into the interior, placed these settlers in political opposition to Crown policy; but this was largely offset by the need for Royal assistance against the Native American tribes whose lands they had taken, often by force. Moreover, the most immediate political opponents of the small, yeoman farmers in the western regions were the low-country planters, the very men taking the lead in the independence movement. For nearly a generation these wealthy planters had used their control of the colonial assemblies to deny fair representation and an equitable court system to the back-country. In the late 1760's, these conflicts had become so acute that they engendered armed confrontation. In 1771, the lowland militia of North Carolina defeated backcountry "Regulators" in a pitched battle at the Alamance River. Everywhere in the backcountry there were grievances that would find renewed expression upon the out-break of the war with England. The instructions of the inhabitants of Mecklenburg County to their delegates to the North Carolina Constitutional Convention of 1776 offered eloquent testimony to the depth and intensity of these feelings:

> In fixing the fundamental principles of Government you shall oppose everything that leans to aristocracy or power in the hands of the rich and chief men exercised to the oppression of the poor.[6]

The necessity for unity in the war against Britain brought some concessions from low-country planters and merchants. Periodic reapportionment of the legislatures appeased those western inhabitants who had watched their numbers grow steadily without a commensurate increase in assembly representation; even here, however, eastern domination was partially perpetuated by basing representation on wealth as well as on population. The new state constitutions reflected the interests of the wealthy in other respects as well. Under the provisions of the South Carolina Constitution candidates for Governor had to own a debt-free estate of £ 10,000; for Senator, £ 2,000; and for Representative, £ 1,000. These were astronomical sums in a society in which the total monetary income of an ordinary farmer during an entire year might be less than £ 25. Property qualifications for officeholding in Maryland were equally stringent, and those for voting were sufficiently restrictive so that fewer than fifty percent of the white adult male population could qualify for the franchise.[7] Similar disparities between rich and poor and between east and west in Virginia were rectified only fifty years after independence in the Constitutional Convention of 1829-1830. Nowhere in the South had the Patriot movement been captured by democratic forces. The struggle for home rule was initiated and controlled by members of the traditional elite.

The ability of the southern leadership to manage the wartime economy and society was not seriously tested until 1778. Armed conflict during the first years of the struggle took place in New England and in the Middle Atlantic states, so there was no serious threat to internal disorder fomented by Loyalist forces; and the financial demands of war, the cost of supplying men and materials to the Continental Army commanded by Washington, could be met from accumulated reserves and through borrowing. In the summer of 1777, for example, South Carolina had sufficient credit to borrow £ 140,000 sterling from its citizens. Within the year, however, a fiscal crisis was at hand. From one end of the South to another governments found their treasuries empty and their inhabitants unwilling or unable to lend sufficient funds to support the war effort. Underpopulated and hard-pressed Georgia limped along on subsidies (eventually amounting to £ 2.5 million) from the Continental Congress. Elsewhere state governments turned reluctantly to taxation, worried that the imposition of a heavy tax burden might discourage friends of the Patriot cause, yet unable to envision any alternative. In the last months of 1777 Virginia levied taxes which were expected to yield £ 25,000 annually, but even this sizable sum left a deficit of £ 445,000 in the following year. This huge gap was filled by the issuance of Treasury notes, which similar deficits in other southern states were financed through the issuance of paper money.[8]

This dramatic and sudden increase in the money supply engendered an inflationary surge of monumental proportions. In Maryland a bag of salt which cost $1 in 1777 had a paper value of $3,900 three years later, while the price of a bushel of wheat increased by a factor of 5,000. While much of this increase was "artificial"—the result of printing presses running wild—there was, in fact, a real shortage of goods occasioned by the British naval embargo, the disruptions of war, and the need to use surplus production to feed and clothe a large (and economically unproductive) army. The "real" price of pork in North Carolina rose from £ 10 a barrel in July, 1777, to £ 20 a year later, and it doubled again to £ 40 by July, 1779.[9] Whatever the cause, it was the merchants who were held to blame. Traders were "neither Whigs nor tories," a Planter complained to the North Carolina *Gazette* in October, 1777, "their short creed is 'that gain is godliness'." Three years later the complaints were much the same. "Whatt a Sett of Atheistical fellows must there be in Newbern," Thomas Hart wrote to William Blount, "that thinks there is Neither God nor Devil to punish them in a Nother World, for their usury to us in this. . . ."[10]

Soon neither merchants nor private institutions were willing to accept state currency issues or treasury notes in payment for needed

military supplies. The breakdown of the monetary system prompted North Carolina to levy a tax in clothing rather than to try to buy the goods. Such expedients were insufficient; dire need demanded more straight measures. The estates of declared or suspected Loyalists were confiscated by the state governments and sold to the highest bidder, even though such seizures infringed upon the rights of private property for which the war was, in part, being fought. Beyond this, the Continental Army and the state militias now forced farmers and artisans to relinquish needed supplies at the point of a gun, offering in return the greatly-depreciated vouchers, notes, or paper currency. Bankrupt, their taxing powers exhausted, without fiscal credit, the state governments directed their armies to resort to primitive force. If justification were needed, the doctrine of self-preservation would have to suffice.

The danger was that these measures might provoke a popular reaction that would endanger the Patriot cause. Such fears and reservations were not without foundation, for the imposition of heavy taxes and confiscatory policies coincided precisely with a major British offensive in the South. The presence of British troops would offer the inhabitants an effective "choice" between loyalty to the Crown or adherence to the rebellion. Here was the major test for the Patriots in the southern states; their will would be tested in a two-year struggle which would go far to determine the ultimate success of the entire independence movement.

Previously the North had borne the brunt of the military conflict. One by one the chief American cities and the centers of colonial political resistance had been attacked and subdued by the British. If the targets were often symbolic—as in the British advance on Philadelphia, the home of the Continental Congress—the intention was not. The British design was to force the Continental Army under Washington into a set battle and then to use superior tactics and numbers to force its surrender. This plan was nearly successful; on more than one occasion Washington's troops were nearly crushed, and his Continental Army never emerged victorious from a major battle. The great success of the American general during these discouraging years was simply in maintaining the Army as a symbol of American resistance. This tactical achievement eventually elicited a British blunder of major proportions. At Saratoga, in the wilderness of New York, a rapid and vast mobilization of New England and New York militiamen in the fall of 1777 gave a small American army a numerical advantage over 5,000 slow-moving British troops and compelled their surrender.

This defeat prompted a new British strategy in 1778, one directed at the southern colonies and based on different tactical principles.

The British army would seek to capture land, not to subdue cities or armies; it would then mobilize local Loyalists to administer this conquered domain, while it moved still further into rebel territory. This new approach reflected a hazy but, in retrospect, a quite accurate assessment of the possibilities offered by the different social and political characteristics of the southern states. There were, in the first place, many potentially "activist" Loyalists in the backcountry —settlers whose previous estrangement from the planter elite would incline them to take up arms against the Patriots, rather than simply to offer "passive" resistance, as was often the case among adherents of the Royal cause in the North. There were also large numbers of recent immigrants in the South, Scottish merchants in Georgia and Highlanders in the Carolina backcountry, groups which retained their allegiance to the British Crown. Even in Maryland, where there were few ethnic divisions and no history of western discontent, there was a substantial Loyalist or neutral population which might be counted upon to render at least covert assistance to an occupying British army.

A second element in British thinking related to the racial composition of the southern population. Some within the Ministry believed slavery would inhibit the ability of the rebel forces to resist a major invasion. It was common knowledge that the South Carolina militia was not mobilized for a backcountry campaign in 1768 because of the fear of slave revolt. This structural weakness in the southern social order could be expected to operate again, preventing the white Patriots from concentrating their forces. Moreover, there was the distinct posibility that the oppressed black population would use the wartime confusion to improve its own position. Some slaves might flee to the frontier, thereby reducing the productive output of farms and plantations; others might actively assist the advancing British troops. The memory of Lord Dunmore's Proclamation of 1776, an invitation to Virginia blacks to join the Royal Governor against the rebels in return for their freedom, was sharply etched in the minds of the white leadership. Nearly 1,000 blacks had responded to the Governor's call, even though the possibilities of success were not great. Even in the absence of a new edict of emancipation—for the British were now unwilling to endanger the slave-based societies in their West Indian islands—confiscated slaves would greatly bolster the logistic capacity of the Royal forces.

The willingness of the British to enlist the services of the black population (and, later, to consider those who had served as Loyalists entitled to evacuation[11]) highlighted the problem posed by the institution of slavery for the Patriot forces. During the long verbal debate over constitutional principles many Patriot writers had con-

demned slavery while arguing that violence was justified in the cause of liberty and equality. Nevertheless, upon hearing of the battles of Lexington and Concord in May 1775, the General Committee of Correspondence in South Carolina proclaimed that it saw

> no alternative but that we submit to abject slavery or appeal to the Lord of Hosts, in defence of the common and unalienable rights, peculiar to Englishmen.[12]

The Committee's condemnation of slave status and its restriction of "unalienable rights" to "Englishmen" represented a tortuous compromise of dubious intellectual validity; a few other white inhabitants of the South (primarily Quakers, German Protestants, and recent Scottish immigrants) carried the logic of the natural rights argument to its inherent conclusion. Slavery, declared the Scottish dominated Parish of St. Andrew in Georgia in January, 1775, was an

> unnatural practice . . . founded in injustice and cruelty, and highly dangerous to our liberty (as well as our lives) debasing part of our fellow creatures below men, and corrupting the virtue and morals of the rest; and is laying the basis of that liberty we contend for . . . upon a very wrong foundation.[13]

The Quakers went even further, attempting to translate ideological precepts into actual practice. Responding to the call of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting in 1776 to "clear their hands" of slavery as soon as possible, many Quakers manumitted their own slaves. This action was quickly denounced by the North Carolina Assembly, which passed a bill directing that those blacks already freed be imprisoned and sold at public auction.[14]

Having thus resolved the philosophical question of the legitimacy of slavery in a republican society by falling back on the "known and Established Laws of the Country," the Southern Patriot leadership was still faced with the pragmatic question of fighting an increasingly bitter war with insufficient manpower. In March of 1779 the Continental Congress suggested that South Carolina and Georgia might raise 3,000 black troops in separate battalions under white officers, with the grant of freedom at the end of their service. Despite the personal plea of John Laurens that this would "advance those who are unjustly deprived of the rights of mankind to a state which would be a proper graduation between abject slavery and perfect liberty" and "reinforce the defenders of liberty with a number of gallant soldiers," this proposal was overwhelmingly rejected by the South Carolina Assembly. Of the southern states, only Maryland permitted blacks to obtain freedom through military service, and

this step was taken most reluctantly under the threat of British invasion.[15]

This inability of the Patriot South to utilize the military services of the black population (which comprised 30 to 50 percent of the total) seriously affected the war effort. The great contribution of the southern aristocracy in the leadership of the American army disguised the fact that most of the men they commanded were recruited from the North, and particularly from New England. In proportion to their white populations, the southern states contributed fewer men to the Continental Army—less than 5 percent as compared to 13 percent for the northern region.[16] In part, this was the result of a different pattern of social and economic development. A higher birthrate and a lower level of mortality combined with limited supplies of arable land to create a large landless population in many parts of the North. For instance, in six towns in New Jersey over twenty percent of the work force did not own land, working as tenant farmers or day laborers, while only fourteen percent of the white population in sixteen counties of North Carolina were landless. It was this section of the population, dominated by young men with little hope of inheriting a substantial family estate, which contributed the great bulk of northern recruits to the Continental Army.[17] But the greater possibility of acquiring a landed estate was not the only factor inhibiting enlistments in the South; fears of racial unrest also compelled many whites to stay at home and to fight in militia units or ad hoc bands rather than to join a formal military force.

All of these factors—a large, activist Loyalist population; racial divisions; a comparatively small and immobile white military organization—worked to assist the British in their conquest of the South. In December, 1778 an expeditionary force of 3,500 soldiers captured Savannah and then extended the British sphere of influence into the backcountry with the capture of Augusta in the following month. This success prompted a major campaign in 1780. Early in the year, 8,500 troops under the command of Sir Henry Clinton landed at Savannah and promptly marched on Charleston. The city fell after brief seige in May; at one blow the Americans had lost the largest city in the South and, even more important, given the shortage of manpower, had been compelled to surrender 5,000 men.

The whole of South Carolina lay open to British invasion. And despite a bitter partisan warfare waged by local Patriots, the British had asserted nominal control over most of the state by August, 1780. This advance was consolidated at the battle of Camden, South Carolina when British troops under Cornwallis routed American forces led by General Gates, the hero of Saratoga. The contrast with the great northern battle was fully appropriate, for it underlined the

crucial importance of the different social structures of the two regions on military events. Only 1,200 militiamen turned out to assist Gates and the regular troops from Maryland and Virginia at Camden. This was fewer than New Hampshire furnished to General Stark at the battle of Bennington in 1777.[18] At Saratoga, moreover, the Patriots were able to gather at least 6,000 militiamen from among the farming population of densely populated New England and New York. The lack of Patriot manpower was one factor which permitted Cornwallis to follow up his triumph at Camden with a tactical victory, again over Gates, at Guilford Courthouse (near Greensboro, N.C.) in March, 1781. Despite losses in minor engagements with American irregular forces led by Daniel Morgan and others, the British were now in firm control of Georgia and the Carolinas.

The subsequent surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown seven months later obscured the magnitude of his achievement and the wisdom of the British southern campaign as a whole. Loyalism and slavery combined to make the South the weakest military section of the United States. Once General Lincoln's force was lost at Charleston, there was simply no way that the Carolinas could be effectively defended by the remaining part of the white Patriot population. Even when Cornwallis marched north to Virginia (a decision for which he was severely criticized by Clinton, his commander) the American army—now headed by General Nathaniel Green—dislodged the Loyalist garrisons and militia only with the greatest difficulty. "We fight, get beaten, and fight again," he lamented at one point. Had Cornwallis adopted a defensive position in the Carolinas, it is doubtful that Patriot forces would have been able to reestablish their control over these crucial southern states.

The intense partisan nature of this warfare gave another distinctive character to the movement for independence in the South. There were few battles between disciplined troops in the British and Continental Armies and many more among ethnic groups, former political enemies, and opposing family clans. Passions were higher in these circumstances, and resentment faded less quickly. Personal antagonisms were exacerbated by property losses. Perhaps as many as 4,000 blacks left Savannah at the time of the British evacuation, while as early as 1778 Thomas Jefferson estimated that more than 30,000 Virginia slaves had used the opportunity offered by the war to improve their position by fleeing their plantations. During Cornwallis' march through the state in 1781, Richard Henry Lee informed his brother that two neighbors had lost "every slave they had in the world" and that "this has been the general case of all those who were near the enemy."[19] Patriots retaliated by confiscating Loyalist

property (valued at nearly £ 5 million sterling in the United States as a whole), and by harrassing those who attempted to return to their homes after the war. This revenge took on a particularly violent character in South Carolina, where some of the most bitter partisan clashes had occurred. Riots by the Marine Anti-Britanic Society shook Charleston in the early 1780's, directed primarily against wealthy Loyalist merchants who had returned to the city. As late as April, 1784—a full year after the signing of the formal peace treaty—the Sons of Liberty in one rural area accosted William Rees, a former Loyalist officer, laid fifty stripes on his back with a hickory stick, and warned him out. In another, more extreme incident, a number of Tories were ordered away from their old properties; when they refused to depart, they were attacked by a mob of Patriots and eight former Loyalists were killed.[20]

That the character of the war for independence and its aftermath assumed a distinct shape in the South was not accidental. It proceeded, rather, from the nature of the southern social order itself: the sharp ethnic and geographic divisions between low- and back-country which encouraged "activist" Loyalism; racial divisions which inhibited military mobilization; the existence of slavery which raised moral and political dilemmas in an independence struggle based on the rhetoric of liberty, equality, and popular sovereignty. This uniqueness did not escape the attention of men and women at the time. As early as 1779, Richard Henry Lee—often described as a "Puritan" in character, if not in origin—wrote to John Adams of his deep personal interest

> in the establishment of a wise and free republic in Massachusetts Bay, where yet I hope to finish the remainder of my days.

"The hasty, unpersevering, aristocratic genius of the South," he continued, "suits not my disposition." Other white southerners noted similar contrasts, while remaining loyal to their own section. "When I was in Congress," Timothy Bloodworth of North Carolina observed in 1789, "the Southern and Northern Interests divided at [the] Susquehannah. I believe it is so now." These sentiments were echoed by Charles Pinckney of South Carolina, who noted the "striking . . . difference that is between the inhabitants of Northern and Southern states." "There we may truly observe," he argued, "that nature has drawn as strong marks of distinction in the habits and manners of the people as he has in her climates and productions." This crucial relationship between environment and culture was explicitly underlined by William Henry Drayton:

> From the nature of the climate, soil, and produce of the several states [he suggested] a northern and southern interest in many particulars naturally and unavoidably arises. . . .[21]

In this conscious articulation of major cultural differences between the North and the South lay an important new theme in American history. Previously there had been many references to the staple-producing areas of the West Indies and the southern mainland on the one hand, and to the commercial and farming colonies of the north on the other. Now this economic and mercantilistic division—one made primarily with reference to their external relations with Great Britain rather than their internal character—was gradually transformed into a social and cultural dichotomy, and one with significant moral overtones. In the decades ahead the power of the southern planter aristocracy would assume a mythic status, as would the virtue of the northern yeoman farmer. Behind these symbols lay real political difference on substantive issues: tariffs, fishing rights, Mississippi navigation, industrialization and, eventually subsuming all of these sub-categories, the opposition between a "free" and a "slave" society. Before 1776, racial slavery was common to all parts of British America; therefore, it was increasingly confined to the southern mainland. Moreover, the basic postulates of slavery had been challenged by the ideology of liberty and equality proclaimed during the movement for independence from Great Britain. Even as the two sections were being pulled more tightly together by the demands of war and the creation of new nation-wide political and constitutional institutions, they were becoming more aware of their inherent social and cultural differences. It is a sobering reflection but, I think, an accurate one, that the nature of the War for Independence—particularly its ideological implications—helped to generate the seeds of the Civil War.

FOOTNOTES

[1] See the Review Essay by H.G. Koenisberger in the *Journal of Modern History,* 46 (March, 1974), 99-106; Max Savelle, *From Empires to Nations* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1974).

[2] Quoted in Jerome H. Wood, Jr., "Conestoga Crossroads: The Rise of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1730-1789," (Ph.D., Brown University, 1969), 297.

[3] Quoted in Michael P. Rogin, *Fathers and Children* (New York, 1975), 21-28.

[4] The influence of the Seven Years War on the American independence movement is argued most forcefully by Lawrence H. Gipson, *The Coming of the American Revolution, 1763-1775* (New York, 1954).

[5] Jackson T. Main, *The Sovereign State, 1775-1783* (New York, 1973), 401, 411, 424, and 428; and, in general, John R. Alden, *The South in the American Revolution* (Baton Rouge, 1963).

[6] Quoted in Sheldon R. Koesy, "Continuity and Change in North Carolina, 1775-1789," (Ph.D., Duke University, 1963), 79; Richard Maxwell Brown, *The South Carolina Regulators* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963).

[7] See, in general, Raymond Gale Starr, "The Conservative Revolution: South Carolina Public Affairs, 1775-1790," (Ph.D., University of Texas, 1964), 73 and *passim.*

[8] Main, *Sovereign States*, chap. 11.

[9] Elizabeth Cometti, "Inflation in Revolutionary Maryland," *William and Mary quarterly*, 3rd ser., 8 (1951), 228-234; Koesy, "North Carolina," 131.

[10] Quoted in George W. Troxler, "The Home Front in Revolutionary North Carolina," (Ph.D., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1970), 135-136.

[11] Kenneth Coleman, *The American Revolution in Georgia, 1763-1789* (Athens, Ga., 1958), 145-146; Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (New York, 1960).

[12] Quoted in Starr, "South Carolina," 23-24.

[13] Quoted in Coleman, *Georgia*, 45-46.

[14] Troxler, "North Carolina," 208-210.

[15] Starr, "South Carolina," 95-98; Main, *Sovereign States*, 403; Coleman, *Georgia*, 188.

[16] Main, *Sovereign States*, 396, 402-403, 420.

[17] Compare Dennis P. Ryan, "Six Towns: Continuity and Change in Revolutionary New Jersey, 1770-1792," (Ph.D., New York University, 1974), 147-149 with Koesy, "North Carolina," 254; Kenneth Lockridge, "Land, Population, and the Evolution of New England Society," *Past and Present*, 39 (1968), 62-80.

[18] Main, *Sovereign States*, 420-421.

[19] Quoted in John H. Franklin, "The North, the South, and the American Revolution,' *Journal of American History*, 62 (June, 1975), 20.

[20] Starr, "South Carolina," 179, 183-4.

[21] All of these quotations are from David Bertelson, *The Lazy South* (New York, 1968), 156, 160, 151, and 140.

EMERGING URBANISM AND INCREASING SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN THE ERA OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

By
Bruce E. Daniels

Historians agree that urbanization is a crucial factor in the modernization process. Traditional historians acknowledge the presence and importance of urban units in the American Colonies, as well as the growth in their size and numbers in the pre-industrial early national period. But these traditional historians contend that cities only became a major factor in American life with industrialization in the second half of the nineteenth century. Historical sociologists usually argue that in non-urban, pre-industrial society, social positions were highly visible and stratification was clear and unambiguous.[1] In the European context, manorial society, of course, provides the classic example of this. Industrialization and urbanization, the sociologists contend, created the modern middle class, rendered individuals anonymous, blurred the clearly defined social positions, and modernized the social structure. The forces of urban demography, a dynamic economy, and technological innovations significantly raised mobility and lessened stratification. These empirical trends in society that accompanied urbanization and industrialization, the argument continues, have been in turn accompanied by a democratization of behavior patterns and a change in ideology towards greater egalitarianism.

In America, the transition from ruralism and stratification to urbanism and egalitarianism seems to correspond to this rough outline of development. One can select points along a chronology that would show the decline of stratification which accompanied the rise of urbanism. The extremely hierarchical societies one associates with Puritan New England and with seignorial New York, Maryland, and South Carolina failed to last intact into the eighteenth century. In the 1740's and 1770's, the catalytic forces of the Great Awakening and the Revolution challenged doctrines of acceptance of authority and superiority and further weakened the social hierarchy. The nineteenth century provided the *coup de grace* through the innovation of political parties, the opening of the West and, finally, massive urbanization and industrialization. The only major exceptions to this pattern of development before the era of the "Robber Barons" were the aberrations of slavery and the plantation South. Historical

theorists would argue that this trend, though somewhat common to all of western society, also manifests itself in a unique American social structure. Although in the twentieth century all of western society may be becoming more similar, the colonies and the new nation throughout the nineteenth century constantly became less European and more American in a fashion that could best be demonstrated as a continuum on a straight line.

I will argue in this essay that neither the line from great to lesser stratification, nor the line from European to American, has been straight. Moreover, the colonial portion of the eighteenth century witnessed an empirical reversal in the continuum. The American colonies between 1700 and 1776 experienced a sharp growth in urbanization accompanied by a growth in social stratification that constantly grew towards approximating the English norm. Cities in pre-industrial America, even though they produced upward and downward social mobility, sharpened rather than blurred social distinctions and positions. The crucial urbanization that made these heightened social distinctions meaningful to the colonists occurred not only in the five cities, Boston, Newport, New York, Philadelphia, and Charlestown, whose importance has been recognized by most scholars—these cities were too exceptional to be meaningful to most colonists—but in the large number of emerging secondary urban units.[2]

The importance and nature of secondary urban units has escaped widespread notice because most historians mistakenly thought that population numbers were the key to defining urbanization. Historical geographers recognize that although population may be a characteristic of urbanization, population density and social and economic functions are much more important criteria.[3] Albany and Savannah, for instance, had populations of 4,000 or less in 1775 but were clearly urban because they had well-defined business districts, served as distribution and collection centers for hinterlands, had a wide range of occupational specialization, and concentrated much of their population in one small area.[4] Farmington, Connecticut, on the other hand, had more than double the population of either Albany or Savannah. Yet Farmington would as clearly not qualify as an urban unit because it had no well-defined business district, little mercantile activity, was peopled almost entirely by farmers, and its population was scattered over 200 square miles. Nor did legal incorporation as a city always serve as a sure test of urbanization. There were between 25 and 45 legally incorporated cities in the colonies, mostly in the middle colonies, many of which were geniune urban units. In the South, and particularly in New England, however, many settlements which were legally only villages or towns functioned as urban

centers. Since only Royal authority could charter a municipal corporation, the New England charter colonies had no power to create legal cities; because municipal incorporation meant a large degree of freedom from outside control, the Royal colonies in the South had no disposition to create them.[5]

Notwithstanding the definitional problems, even the areas traditionally thought to be non-urban experienced a massive growth in secondary urbanization in the eighteenth century. Portsmouth in New Hampshire, Salem, Medford, and Marblehead in Massachusetts, and Providence in Rhode Island, all competed with Boston and Newport as central places for northern and eastern New England.[6] In Connecticut five secondary urban units, Hartford, Middletown, New Haven, New London, and Norwich, began to challenge Boston and New York's ability to tap southern New England as a cask with spigots at either end.[7] In Pennsylvania a major increase in western colonial urbanization occurred after 1730 with the establishment of Lancaster and Wilmington. Easton, Harrisburg, Chambersburg, and Gettysburg also challenged Philadelphia's domination of Pennsylvania, although none could compete within fifty miles of Philadelphia without being destroyed by its gravitational pull.[8] Many units, small by population size, functioned as urban units throughout the non-tidewater lower South. Norfolk, Virginia, with a population less than Farmington, Connecticut, served as the major emporium on the mainland for trade with the West Indies. Cabinpoint, Urbana, Dumfries, Richmond, Falmouth, Fredericksburg, and Alexandria, Virginia, all functioned as major distribution and collection centers.[9] Annapolis and Baltimore belie the notion that urbanization made little progress along the Chesapeake.[10] Everywhere one looks in the colonies in the mid-eighteenth century, pre-industrial central places were emerging for primarily economic reasons. In 1770 only 7% of the American population lived in urban units, but the percentage was growing sharply and playing a disproportionately important role in the colonies.[11]

Sociologists clash over the causes of social stratification. Functional sociologists argue that stratification results when any social, economic, or occupational differentiation occurs. They believe that stratification has its roots in men's persistent search for differences among themselves and their equally persistent tendency to evaluate these differences. Those opposed to functionalist theory contend that differentiation is a natural condition of mankind and should not be equated with the stratification which occurs only when the differences of one generation are passed on to the next generation intact. To the non-functionalist, only inherited differentiation or differentiation that is long-enduring involve meaningful stratification. However, all

sociologists would agree that the longer a differentiated hierarchy exists, the more it stratifies.[12]

All historians and historical sociologists agree with the folk culture that eighteenth century American society was significantly less stratified than Georgian England. Few scholars, however, recognize that over the course of the colonial eighteenth century the gap between the two social structures narrowed perceptibly. In the colonies, differentiation of position increased at a rapid rate and the tendency of the social and economic oligarchies created by this differentiation to perpetuate themselves also increased. The increase in stratification and the tendency to approach the English model occurred most discernibly in the emerging urban units and will be illustrated hereafter by an examination of Connecticut's five urban centers, Hartford, Middletown, New Haven, New London, and Norwich.

Connecticut's five cities exercised a political and economic influence grossly disproportionate to their populations. While comprising less than 10% of the colony's total population, they produced 40% of the governor's councilors elected between 1700 and 1784. Five of the nine governors in this period were from the five cities. Of Connecticut's seven most important military leaders during the Revolution, five resided in the five cities and a sixth had spent four years at Yale in New Haven. Similarly, the leader of the loyalists in Connecticut lived in New Haven. An examination of a list of Connecticut's 54 leading merchants in this period shows that 41 of them, or 76%, were from the five centers.[13]

Connecticut underwent an economic revolution at mid-century in which it changed from primarily grain-growing subsistence farming to large scale production of livestock and increased manufacture of handicrafts for export. After a decline in the standard of living between 1718 and the 1740's, a strong upsurge of business activity occurred in the late 1740's. The five cities led, controlled, and benefitted from the economic revitalization.[14] Trade—particularly the West Indian trade—increased dramatically. The number of ships utilizing these ports tripled; both exports and imports increased dramatically between 1756 and 1774.[15] The five cities, led by the merchants of New Haven and Norwich and the ships of New London, controlled almost all of this trade. Hartford and Middletown became the collection depots and distribution centers for large agricultural hinterlands. The importance of all five cities as central places can be seen by the networks of highways leading from them into the backcountry.[16] Although they had been increasing constantly in function and complexity, it was the boom of the 1740's-1750's which transformed these centers from "sleepy towns" to provincial cities. Not

content merely to control Connecticut's interaction with the great merchants in over twenty West Indian ports, the five cities increasingly vied with Boston and New York in the direct European trade.[17] That this effort was largely unsuccessful does not detract from the grandeur and expansiveness of the cities' aspirations or the reality of their achievements.

The array of shops, goods, services, and social pleasures available in the highly developed business districts of these mid-eighteenth century cities was impressive. Nearly every known commodity in the Western World could be obtained on the seven or eight commercial streets in Hartford. Wigmakers, watchmakers, barbers, harnessmakers, braziers and pewterers, apothecaries, grocers, dry goods merchants, jewellers, printers, and artisans of every kind plied their trade and sold their wares. Ten taverns and fourteen inns with colorful names like "Bunch of Grapes," "Old Fortune of War," and "The Harp and the Crown," made sure that Hartford residents and visitors did not have to go far to quench their thirst. Newspapers advertised goods from Holland, Geneva, France, The Indies, and India. The ladies of Hartford, wives of future patriots of Republican simplicity, frequented the shop of Marie Gabriel, "a mantuamaker and milliner from Paris;" their husbands discussed vintage years for grapes while browsing in newly opened winestores. The elite women of these cities, worried that their attire might be out of fashion, quickly copied styles described by recent travelers to Boston or New York. The outlandish jewelry, parasols, peacock fans, awkward hoops, and especially the hair dressings worn by the ladies of Norwich drove one man to publish a poem in a newspaper satirizing the calash.

> "Hail, great Calash. O'erwhelming veil,
> by all indulgent heaven,
> to calling nymphs and maidens stale,
> in sportive kindness given.
>
> Safe hid beneath the circling sphere
> unseen by mortal eyes,
> the mingled heaps of oil and hair,
> and wool and powder lies."

Men also carefully cultivated their coiffures. When Samuel Edwards of Hartford died, he left, besides his large amounts of elegant clothes, a "noted wig," "best bob wig," and "natural white wig." The social life of these elegantly attired urbanites also reflected a growing sophistication and love of the mindless but enjoyable pleasures usually associated with leisurely life in English cities. At a wedding dance in Norwich, ninety guests danced 92 jigs, 52 contra dances, 45 minuets,

and 17 hornpipes. Dancing clubs, formed in all of the cities, kept late hours and exhausted their members. Young men and women even dared violate the law and meet on the street on Sunday for social occasions.[18]

While the faddish and foppish elite shopped in the cities, the number of people who could not afford even decent middle class clothes, and who had no reason to feel merry about anything, was increasing. In the half-century preceding the Revolution the gap between the wealthiest and poorest members of society increased in absolute and also in relative numbers. The transition from a frontier environment to an urban stage was accompanied by a growing differentiation of economic classes.[19] Boston, the most economically differentiated community in New England, became an urban area where "merchant princes and proletarians" characterized the eighteenth century social order. The destitute could be seen in its streets as they tried desparately to avoid its "filthy, dark, crowded, and odoriferous" poorhouse.[20] Connecticut's cities differed only by degree from Boston. The richest 30% of Boston's probated population owned 85.30% of society's total wealth between 1760 and 1776, whereas the same percentage of Hartford's population owned 73.94%. The richest 30% owned only 68.05% in Suffolk County, Massachusetts, however, and but 67.50% in Connecticut's small towns.[21] Even outside the five main urban areas of Connecticut—in small coastal trading ports like Milford, with its small but concentrated urban population—the top 10% of society owned 36% of the wealth as opposed to the 25% owned by the wealthiest 10% of Connecticut society in general. While the average employed, non-skilled urban proletarian earned only £25 per year, Daniel Lathrop of Norwich managed to bequeath £500 each to Yale University, Norwich's treasury, and the city's first ecclesiastical society. The living expenses of many of the cities' gentlemen totaled as much as £700 per year, while other families, even with several members employed, struggled to survive on less than £50 a year. The periodic unemployment of numerous unskilled workers and mariners in the cities also caused many to slip below the income required to support a family in a "middlin" manner.[22] In the wake of economic disparities residential neighborhoods became segregated and differentiated according to wealth and occupation. The residential patterns reflected hardening class lines.[23] Economic mobility, while always present in the northern cities to a greater extent than in England, became more limited and the opportunity to exploit it more socially determined.[24]

In addition to the growing social and economic differentiation, the century-long homogeneity in religion and ethnicity disappeared. A more cosmopolitan pluralism emerged in Connecticut's cities. The

fight over the Saybrook Platform in the early years of the eighteenth century and the mid-century factionalizing during the Great Awakening shattered the unity of the Congregational church.[25] The fighting over the Great Awakening, bitter in most towns, was most virulent in Connecticut's urban areas. Although only one-half of Connecticut's towns spawned separatist parishes during the Awakening, all five cities did. In each city, with the exception of Hartford, the religious dissension reached extraordinary heights and resulted in deep, angry contention.[26] The urban communities lost a higher percentage of converts to the Anglican Church than did many of the small towns that surrounded them. Anglicans also had greater success in officeholding in urban areas than in rural regions, and Anglicanism no longer was a crushing burden for aspirant officeholders.[27] Catholicism also increased its numbers, and Jewish worship even appeared in New Haven. This plurality of worship reflected an increase in the settlement of new nationalities in the five cities. Spanish, Portuguese, French, Irish, Dutch, and West Indians emigrated to Connecticut's cities. Previously only an occasional French Hueguenot or Protestant New Amsterdam Dutchman kept the population from being totally Congregationalist-English.[28] Most of the non-English came to the cities to promote commerce and hence joined the mercantile class. While non-English merchants usually did not become elected leaders in the communities, they did become influential and moved in the best social circles.

The growing differentiation and stratification in Connecticut's cities was reflected in their governments and political patterns. The selectmen increasingly became executive officers who functioned as supervisors over a burgeoning list of lesser officers.[29] The numbers of officers elected by the town meetings increased from approximately 25 at the beginning of the century to over 100 in three of the cities by the end of the colonial period. Greater distinctions separated the selectmen from the lesser officers. Moreover, the town meetings grew less active and allowed the selectmen more discretionary power to govern. Instead of democratizing officeholding patterns, as is emphasized in "consensus" accounts of eighteenth century politics, each city experienced a growth in the degree of oligarchy among officeholders.[30] Rotation of office, which had characterized the election of selectmen before 1740, gave way to patterns of increasing reelection. Family ties and connections became more important for political success. In the 1720's-1730's one to three families emerged in each city to dominate most of the major offices. The families invariably were descended from the founding generation of the seventeenth century and were among the cities wealthiest residents.[31]

By the late eighteenth century these emerging urban centers had

began to look more like English provincial cities and less uniquely American. It was the cities, of course, that led the American resistance to the British imperial policies; ironically, these cities, at the moment of their rebellion, approximated the English urban and elite social structure more than at any time in their previous existence. Even the demographic factors of birth rates, death rates, and marriage ages deviated less from the English norm and began to be affected by the hardening of class lines and lessening of mobility and economic opportunity. One scholar recently suggested that as absurd as it sounds, America may have been becoming just another "overcrowded" old world society by 1776. This judgement, with regard to the urban areas, is hardly preposterous. Political and economic power, as well as social prestige, were becoming concentrated in a small number of men and families. The elitism of the seventeenth century Puritan village had co-existed with feelings of unity and communalism within a homogeneous community. Classes had existed but they were bound together in a whole unit. The eighteenth century cities became sufficiently heterogeneous and differentiated to destroy, or badly wound, unity. Classes emerged that felt little in common with each other.[32]

Other indicators suggest that the colonies were closer to the English norm and more aware of the Atlantic world than they ever were before, or would be again, until World War One. In the seventeenth century each of the colonies had been exceptionally distinct, but in the eighteenth century, as each copied the English model, they became more similar.[33] English imports per capita into the colonies increased steadily throughout the eighteenth century and at a greater rate of increase than other imports. Carriages graced city streets in increasing numbers. The fox hunt even made its appearance in Charlestown and probably in Newport.[34] The bar and bench, the medical profession, and the military styled themselves more along the lines of their old world colleagues.[35] Even the Puritan church grew so Anglicized—in ways such as using melodies and notes in its singing—that purists stigmatized it as the "Catholick" Congregational Church. Jonathan Edwards, the greatest American religious thinker of the eighteenth century, was more a European theologian who owed little to the Mathers or Stoddards but much to Locke, Newton, and Hobbes.[36]

The number of newspapers in all of the colonies grew from Boston's one in 1704 to 48 widely scattered journals in 1775. Almost all these journals concentrated their news on non-local stories. Reflecting their growing cosmopolitanism, each of Connecticut's five cities commenced the publication of newspapers by the end of the colonial period. The content of the news stories was heavily English and

European.[37] Other sophisticated attributes of Connecticut's five cities can be seen in the growth of large personal libraries and book stores, and in the creation of regular post offices. The major public buildings constructed in the late colonial period had the dignity of well-constructed brick Georgian architecture. An unusual example of the decline of the wilderness conditions in Connecticut's cities can be seen in the widely heralded killing of the "last rattlesnake" in Norwich. By the outbreak of the Revolution the five cities had large public grammar schools, and Yale University in New Haven enrolled the large number of 200 students. The great demand for domestic servants caused the appearance of a slave market in Middletown in the 1760's.[38]

Most of the Anglicization or Europeanization occurred without conscious thought, but at times the desire to copy English society was given overt expression. John Trumball, the young Yale poet, wrote an immensely popular poem printed in New Haven called "The Progress of Dullness," in which Tom Brainless and Dick Hairbrain competed for the love of Miss Simper.[39] Through these characters Trumbull condemned American society and urged it to be more like the sophisticated English society he admired. Conversely, European visitors invariably expressed amazement at the similarities between the cities of the old world and the new. Some American cities even displayed such unwanted attributes of European cities as growing health problems, increased crime, and soaring taxes, although generally Connecticut's urban centers did not.[40]

The Revolutionary experience did not end the trend towards the Anglicization of the cities. Connecticut's five urban areas became aware of themselves as entities distinct from their fellow towns and decided to seek incorporation as legal cities. Throughout the eighteenth century in Connecticut, and in every other colony, differences between farm inhabitants and city dwellers surfaced with increased regularity and urgency.[41] In Connecticut's five cities the conflict became acute because each town was an amalgam of an urban business district that was surrounded by outlying farms within the same legal unit. Each of the five towns contained large numbers of farmers, often a majority, whose needs were antithetical to the business community and who often blocked projects which the business community regarded as essential.[42] As early as 1771 New Haven appointed a committee to investigate incorporating the business district of the town as a separate city.[43] Because the Revolutionary War destroyed the commerce of the militarily exposed ports of New Haven and New London, and because Hartford, Middletown, and Norwich, rapidly increased their business districts' commerce by acting as major entrepots, all five centers were convinced at the end

of the war that they could only safeguard their mercantile interests by becoming incorporated cities. The Revolutionary War also caused both merchants and farmers to conclude that fundamental differences separated urban and rural areas. Few of the surrounding farmers opposed the drive for incorporation and in 1784 the business districts of the five areas acquired standard English municipal government consisting of a "Mayor, Aldermen, Common Council, and Freemen." The only basic difference between the five new city governments and English municipal corporations was that the membership of freemen in the Connecticut cities was quite large; hence, a meeting of their freemen was a large deliberative body while in the English cities the membership was very restricted.[44] Each of the new cities still remained a part of the original towns and still took part in town government.

Connecticut's five acts of incorporation were not unique in the new states. During the Revolutionary shakeup, a wave of incorporations, beginning with Richmond, Virginia in 1782 and Charleston, South Carolina in 1783, brought the legal status of other American cities in line with their economic status. The regulation of commerce, the sole reason for incorporation in Connecticut's cities, dominated the incorporation acts and the business of the five cities during their first years. To underscore that largeness of population need not be a criterion for definition of an urban area, none of Connecticut's new cities, when separated from the town's farmers, had more than 4,000 inhabitants.[45]

The growing synthesis between political, social, and economic power in the five cities did not immediately end during the Revolutionary period. Political officeholding was more oligarchic than ever and family prestige, as an important political favor, was at a high point during the Revolutionary years, but undoubtedly the seeds were sown for the destruction of a few families' monopoly of officeholding.[46] The peak of a political cycle was reached during the Revolutionary years. The party battles of the 1790's and of the early nineteenth century, unleashed by Revolutionary forces, ended total dominance of major officeholding by the rich and well-born. However, while the synthesis between power and wealth ended in the half-century after the Revolution, the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few and the growing economic stratification continued in Connecticut and in the other cities of the new states. If one looks ahead to the distribution of the nation's wealth in 1861, the ongoing trend can be substantiated.[47] In the immediate Revolutionary years, Hartford's, Middletown's, and Norwich's crucial commercial roles in the provisioning of the Revolutionary armies assured that their commerce would increase, the trend in their increasing importance

would be accentuated, and no democratization would occur in their distribution of wealth.[48]

In conclusion then, it appears clear that the colonies did not enter their national existence entirely as a rural, homogeneous, unstratified society with only a handful of urban pockets. A century-long trend towards secondary urbanization and towards social stratification that approached English norms preceded the Revolution and in some ways was intensified by it. In Massachusetts, in the thirty years after the Revolution, much of rural society exchanged its values for ones that at first had appeared only in Boston and then in a few secondary centers.[49] Heterogeneity, cosmopolitanism, and organizational variety, which were once found in the cities began to make their inroads in rural Massachusetts' "Peaceable Kingdoms" and soon became a generalized feature of the new state's society. Voluntary associations, which usually are indications of more sifting going on within the social strata, rose sharply in rural society. Small western towns, settled in the half-century after the Revolution, dreamed of becoming great urban communities and hoped to be known as the "Athens of Ohio," or of Tennessee. Settlements never seemed content to remain rural or sleepy towns. They built grand hotels and chartered colleges as indications of their urban aspirations and pretensions.[50] Urban society and urban values were expanding far before any large-scale industrial development. Anglicization was not ended by the Revolution but also continued apace. The rhetoric of post-Revolutionary society may have argued against English models of behavior but the growth in the concentration of wealth, in commerce, in the poor classes, in cosmopolitanism and urban values, and the love of things English during "The Federal Era," all show that in reality, if not in ideology, the trend towards urbanization and stratification survived the Revolution and continued into the national period.

FOOTNOTES

[1] The sociological theory upon which this paragraph is based is found in Kurt B. Mayer, "The Changing Shape of the American Class Structure," *Social Research,* 30 (Winter, 1963), 462-68.

[2] The conception of Anglicization of features of Massachusetts' society is discussed in John Murrin, "Anglicizing An American Colony: the Transformation of Provincial Massachusetts;; (Ph.D. Diss., Yale University, 1966), and Murrin, "The Transformation of Bench and Bar in Provincial Massachusetts," *Colonial America: Essays in Politics and Social Development,* ed., Stanley Katz, (Boston, 1971). The idea of increased stratification is discussed in Kenneth Lockridge, "Land, Population and the Evolution of

New England Society, 1630-1790," *Colonial America*, ed., Katz, 467-491, and Lockridge, "Social Change and the Meaning of the American Revolution," *Journal of Social History*, VI (Spring, 1973), 403-439. the importance of the five main colonial centers has been brilliantly chronicled by Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in The Wilderness: The First Century of Urban Life in America, 1625-1742* (Originally published New York, 1938; Oxford University Press edition, 1970), and *Cities in Revolt: Urban Life in America, 1743-1776* (Originally published New York, 1955; Oxford University Press edition, 1970). Jackson Turner Main did note over a decade ago that the lesser cities were important and that their social structures "with certain modifications . . . shared the same qualities" as the larger cities. See Jackson Turner Main, *The Social Structure of Revolutionary America* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1965), 34.

[3] See Joseph A. Ernst and H. Roy Merrens, "Camden's Turrets Pierce the Skies! The Urban Process in the Southern Colonies During the Eighteenth-Century," *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXX (October, 1973), 549-574. Ernst's and Merrens' position is questioned in Hermann Wellenreuther, "Urbanization in the Colonial South: A Critique," *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXXI (October, 1974), 653-668, but ably defended by their rebuttal in the same issue. See also James T. Lemon, "Urbanization and The Development of Eighteenth-Century Southeastern Pennsylvania and Adjacent Delaware," *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXIV (October, 1967), 501-542, 520-524.

[4] Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt*, 216, 217.

[5] Ernest S. Griffith, *History of American City Government: The Colonial Period* (New York, 1938), 71, 72, 97. I shall follow the convention accepted by Carl Bridenbaugh and most American historians of calling urban areas "cities" even though often they legally were not.

[6] Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt*, 48.

[7] Gaspare John Saladino, "The Economic Revolution in Late Eighteenth-Century Connecticut" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Wisconsin, 1964), 17-20; Robert Owen Decker, "The New London Merchants: 1645-1901: The Rise and Decline of a Connecticut Port" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Connecticut, 1970), 30-38; Rollin G. Osterweis, *Three Centuries of New Haven, 1638-1938* (New Haven, 1953), 75-76; and Frances Manwaring Caulkins, *A History of Norwich, Connecticut* (Hartford, 1966), 309.

[8] Lemon, "Urbanization," 502-517.

[9] Ernst and Merrens, "Urbanization in South," 558-569; Robert Coakley, "Virginia Commerce During The American Revolution" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Virginia, 1949), *Passim*; James H. soltow, "The Role of Williamsburg in the Virginia Economy, 1750-1775," *William and Mary Quarterly*, IV (October, 1958), 467-482, 468.

[10] Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt*, 216, 217.

[11] James A. Henretta, *The Evolution of American Society, 1700-1815: An Interdisciplinary Analysis* (Lexington, Massachusetts, 1973), 80-81. Bridenbaugh, in an unfortunately little-used book, *The Colonial Craftsman* (New

York, 1950), chapter IV, calls attention to the importance of these secondary units, but his remarks have escaped wide notice.

[12] Talcott Parsons is probably the best known proponent of functionalism. See Walter Buckley, "Social Stratification and the Functional Theory of Social Differentiation," *Social Stratification in the United States,* Jack L. Roach, Llewellyn Gross, and Orville Gursslin (eds.) (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1969), 17-24, see also Roach et al (eds.), *Social Stratification,* "Introduction," 3.

[13] North Callahan, *Connecticut's Revolutionary War Leaders,* Connecticut Bicentennial Series, III (Chester, Connecticut, 1973), *passim*; Thomas Barrow, *Connecticut Joins the Revolution,* Connecticut Bicentennial Series, I (Chester, Connecticut, 1973), *passim*; Saladino, "The Economic Revolution," appendices 29 and 30, 425-432. In all of New England, cities always contributed a disproportionate share of the colony officers. See Edward Cook Jr., "Local Leadership and the Typology of New England Towns, 1700-1785)," *Political Science Quarterly,* LXXXVI (December, 1971), 586-608, 594.

[14] Henretta, *The Evolution of Society,* 41; Saladino, "The Economic Revolution," 17-20.

[15] Saladino, "The Economic Revolution," 1-5; Decker, "The Rise and Decline of a Port," 253-256.

[16] Saladino, "The Economic Revolution," 17.

[17] Osterweis, *New Haven,* 75-76; Caulkins, *Norwich,* 309; Saladino, "The Economic Revolution," 4-17; Henretta, *The Evolution of Society,* 41; and Decker, "The Rise and Decline of a Port," 37-38.

[18] For the details of this paragraph see William Deloss Love, *The Colonial History of Hartford* (originally published Hartford, 1914, Pequot Press edition, 1974), 232-250; Caulkins, *Norwich,* 311-335; Decker, "The Rise and Decline of a Port, 55-56; Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt,* 41, 156, 163-164, 279; and William Weedon, *The Economic and Social History of New England, 1620-1789,* 2 Vols. (originally published New York, 1890; Hillory House edition, 1963), I, 249.

[19] Bruce C. Daniels, "Long-Range Trends of Wealth Distribution in Eighteenth-Century New England," *Explorations in Economic History,* XI (Winter, 1973-74), 123-135, *passim*; Main, *Social Structure,* 37; and Henretta, "Economic Development and Social Structure in Colonial Boston," *William and Mary Quarterly,* XXII (January, 1965), 75-92, 85-105.

[20] Henretta, *The Evolution of Society,* Chap. III; and Allan Kulikoff, "The Progress of Inequality in Revolutionary Boston," *William and Mary Quarterly,* XXVIII (July, 1971), 375-412, 384.

[21] Daniels, "Long-Range Trends," 129, 131.

[22] Main, *Social Structure,* 35, 73, 116-123; Caulkins, *Norwich,* 328; and Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt,* 361.

[23] Carl Abbott, "The Neighborhoods of New York, 1760-1775," *New York History,* LXI (January, 1974), 35-54, 35-52; Kulikoff, "The Progress of Inequality," 398-409; and Henretta, *The Evolution of Society,* 86.

[24] Henretta, *The Evolution of Society*, 98; and Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt*, 211.

[25] Richard Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut*, 1690-1765 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1967), *passim*; Oscar Zeichner, *Connecticut's Years of Controversy, 1750-1776*, Williamsburg, Va., 1949) chap. 2; James Walsh, "The Great Awakening in the First Congregational Church of Woodbury, Connecituct," *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXVIII (October, 1971), 543-562, *passim;* and Henretta, *The Evolution of Society*, 129-130.

[26] C.C. Goen, *Revivalism and Separatism in New England, 1740-1800* (New Haven, 1962), 68-90, 115, 302-309.

[27] Bruce E. Steiner, "Anglican Officeholding in Pre-Revolutionary Connecticut: The Parameters of New England Community," *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXXI (July, 1974), 369-406, 375, 377.

[28] Osterweis, *New Haven*, 90, 111; and Decker, "The Rise and Decline of a Port," 40.

[29] The statements about the nature and growth of local government have been discussed more fully in a preliminary article, Daniels, "The Growth in Size and Power of Local Government in Colonial Connecticut," *The Bulletin of the Connecticut Historical Society*, XXXIX (January, 1974), 20-25, *passim*. I have elaborated at great length on the nature of executive offices and the town meeting in two essays I am preparing for publication, "The Frequency of Town Meetings in Colonial Connecticut," and "Puritan Villages Become Large Towns: The Complexity of Local Government in Connecticut, 1676-1776."

[30] For the Connecticut cities see Daniels, "Large-Town Officeholding in Eighteenth-Century Connecticut: The Growth of Oligarchy," *The Journal of American Studies*, IX (April, 1975); and Daniels, "Family Dynasties in Connecticut's Largest Towns," *Canadian Journal of History*, VIII (September, 1973), 99-111, *passim*. For substantiation of this in other cities see Kulikoff, "The Progress of Inequality," 390; Henretta, *The Evolution of Society*, 90-111; Murrin, "Anglicizing An American Colony," 264-265; and Michael Zuckerman, *Peaceable Kingdoms: New England Towns in the Eighteenth-Century* (New York, 1970), Appendix VIII.

[31] Daniels, Family Dynasties," and Murrin, "Anglicizing An American Colony," 264. Carl Bridenbaugh feels that the colonial aristocracy peaked in social prestige in the 1760's and 1770's. See Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt*, 332.

[32] Henretta, *The Evolution of Society*, 14, discusses the changing demographic characteristics of the cities. An example of demographic changes from unique American norms to English norms in a non-urban area can be found in Philip Greven Jr., *Four Generations: Population, Land and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (Ithaca, New York, 1970). Lockridge, "Land Population," 467, makes the "overcrowded argument and expands on it in "Social Change," *passim*. For the seventeenth century communalism and unit of villages see Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hun-*

dred Years (New York, 1970), *passim*, and Sumner Chilton Powell, *Puritan Village* (Middletown, Connecticut, 1963), *passim*.

[33] Murrin, "Anglicizing An American Colony," 20. Murrin's thesis is the first major explicit treatment of Anglicization though Bridenbaugh in *Cities in Revolt* had implicitly dealt with the same theme, Chaps., V, VI, and IX.

[34] Henretta, *The Evolution of Society*, 42; and Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt*, 341, 365.

[35] Murrin, "Anglicizing an American Colony," *passim*. Edward E. Atwater (ed.), *History of the City of New Haven By An Association of Writers* (New York, 1887), describes some of these changes in New Haven in "The Bench and the Bar," and "Changes in Medicine and Surgery," chaps. XIII and XIV.

[36] Murrin, "Anglicizing an American Colony," 28-38.

[37] Sidney Kobre, *The Development of the Colonial Newspaper* (Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1960), 97, 174, 177.

[38] Weedon, *Economic and Social History*, 546, 763; Osterweis, *New Haven*, 102, 158; Love, *Colonial Hartford*, 230; Caulkins, *Norwich*, 299; J. William Frost, *Connecticut Education in the Revolutionary Era*, Connecticut Bicentennial Series, VII (Chester, Connecticut, 1974), 14; and Louis Leonard Tucker, *Connecticut's Seminary of Sedition: Yale College*, Connecticut Bicentennial Series VIII (Cheste, Connecticut, 1974), 124.

[39] Atwater, *New Haven*, 194.

[40] Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt*, 118-132.

[41] Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, 54-72, shows that often conflicts in Connecticut towns were between the rich inhabitants of town centers interested in commerce and the middle-class farmers in outlying areas. Walsh, "The Great Awakening," 559, shows ideological and religious splits often pitted the town center against the outlying farmers. Griffith, *American City Government*, 262-263, demonstrates that the same split between business district merchants and outlying farmers characterized most cities. Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt*, 10, 11; and Murrin, "Anglicizing An American Colony," 267, also agree that urban-rural splits were crucial factors.

[42] Christopher Collier, *Roger Sherman's Connecticut: Yankee Politics and The American Revolution* (Middletown, Connecticut, 1971), 197, 198, discusses the fights in New Haven. Love, *Colonial Hartford*, 348, discusses them in Hartford. Weedon, *Economic and Social History*, 735, discusses the anomaly of Hartford, containing a clear urban center, also producing vast amounts of wheat as late as the 1760's.

[43] Love, *Colonial Hartford*, 343; and Osterweis, *New Haven*, 112.

[44] Love, *Colonial Hartford*, 348, 349; Atwater, *New Haven*, 80, 81; and Osterweis, *New Haven*, 165, discusses the anxieties of the urban areas. David Roth, *Connecticut's War Governor: Jonathan Trumbull, Connecticut Bicentennial Series, IX* (Chester, Connecticut, 1974), 74; Collier, *Roger Sherman's Connecticut*, 198; and Love, *Colonial Hartford*, 348, show the heightened tension. For the acts of incorporation see *State Records*, V (January, 1784), 257-277, and V (May, 1784), 343-373. The similarities

between the new cities and the English model can easily be seen by comparing the five corporations to English ones described in Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *English Local Government* IV, *Statutory Authorities For Specific Purposes* (originally published London, 1922, London, 1963), 353-373.

[45] Love, *Colonial Hartford,* 343, 354-355; and Osterweis, *New Haven,* 157, 165.

[46] For the increase in officeholding oligarchy see Daniels, "Large Town Officeholding," *passim.*

[47] JacksonTurner Main, "Trends in Wealth Concentration Before 1860," *Journal of Economic History* (June, 1971), 445-447; and Kulikoff, "The Progress of Inequality," 376.

[48] Chester Destler, *Connecticut: The Provisions State,* Connecticut Bicentennial Series, V (Chester, Connecticut, 1973), *passim;* Saladino, "The Economic Revolution," 43; and Henretta, *The Evolution of Society, 167.*

[49] This discussion of the spread of urban values is based on Richard D. Brown, "The Emergence of Urban Society in Rural Massachusetts, 1760-1820," LXI *Journal of American History* (June, 1974), 29-51.

[50] Boorstin, *The National Experience,* part three.

THE REVOLUTION, THE FOUNDING FATHERS, AND THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

By
John J. Turner, Jr.

> True, this office [the Presidency] was viewed with some suspicion.... Framers had vivid recollections of autocratic actions of the king of England, surrounded by friends who did his bidding. They would have no king in this country, nor set up any office in which an ambitious man could come to exercise kingly powers.
>
> Broadus Mitchell and Louise Mitchell

The sweltering Philadelphia summer of 1787 made the difficult work of the Constitutional Convention even more arduous. It was the worst time of the year to engage in political wrangling. Of the many knotty issues which troubled the assembly, the efforts to provide for a president were probably the most perplexing. The Convention quickly agreed on the necessity for a national executive; but here consensus ended. Delegates divided over whether a single or a plural executive was more desirable, over the length of the term as well as eligibility for re-election and over the powers to be invested in the office.

Wrestling with these questions, the most vexing detail concerned the mode for electing the chief executive. On September 6, during the closing days of the meeting, the Convention finally adopted the electoral college mechanism for choosing a president. The tedious debate which produced this complicated scheme and the subsequent operation of the electoral college, which proved to be very different from the delegates' expectations, have obscured the fact that the plan was consistent with the Framers' concept of the nature of responsible republican government, the institutional requirements of sound governance, and the appropriate means of conducting public business. Rather than being a "Rube Goldberg mechanism" or a "jerry-rigged improvisation," the electoral college was patterned on a dynamic set of beliefs which emerged from the Revolution and transformed American political culture.[1]

The Founding Fathers did not impose a utopian system on the new nation. Historical experience, "the least fallible guide of human opinions," and "the oracle of truth," guided them as they attempted to erect a government that would be in harmony with the philosophical milieu of the American Revolution and the fundamental and

unique conditions of the young republic. Steeped in the anti-authoritarian opposition literature of seventeenth and eighteenth century English radicalism, which formed the nucleus of the ideology of the Revolution, the delegates were profoundly suspicious of human nature and of man's capacity to use power wisely. They regarded self-interest as a dominant motive of political behavior. No system, no class, high or low, could be trusted on its own moral worth. Liberty was always threatened and frequently destroyed by leaders, particularly the executive, who were corrupted by power and usurped authority. Despotism, they believed, could be prevented only through a constitutional structure which would limit man's natural licentiousness by such devices as federalism and the separation of powers.[2]

Most delegates were particularly anxious to devise a governmental system which would mitigate against, or at least control, parties and factions. Their theory of republican politics had no room for the acceptance of a legitimate opposition. They conceived of parties as conspiratorial, malevolent enemies of restrained government and advance agents of despotism. On the one hand they envisioned groups demagogically drawing fanatic mob support and, on the other hand, they saw tight, powerful, largely secret factions manipulating government for personal ends. The public business, most assumed, should be conducted without these disrupting alien forces which devoured liberty.[3]

If not parties, though, what method or machinery would they employ to direct the affairs of the infant republic? They embraced a social structure in which politics was a non-institutional phenomenon, an unwritten canon of political behavior, nearly identical with the other forces organizing society. They cherished the politics of deference, a politics in which leadership was recruited through the channels of instinctive social habit.[4]

Clearly the delegates did not consider all men qualified to govern. Their writings abound with references to men "pre-eminent for ability and virtue," to "those politicians and statesmen . . . most celebrated for the soundness of their principles," and to the "best men." Only a particular breed of men, in their estimation, possessed the unusual characteristics essential for public office. Such men "stood" for office; they were chosen, not nominated for leadership. Drawn from among land owners, merchants and "the learned professions," these gentlemen and friends of good government possessed the wealth and leisure to pursue politics as an avocation rather than a vocation. They were presumed to be selected for political office by a natural deference that was the very texture of society and would serve from a deep sense of duty and obligation to the community.

The public welfare could be trusted to such men.[5]

At the same time, the delegates were compelled to reconcile their concept of deference with the revolutionary notion of republicanism which emerged after independence and formed the ideological underpinning of the new nation. Now ultimate sovereignty rested with all of the people and, most significantly, power was lodged between the people and their leaders, not between King, Lords, and Commons. It seemed axiomatic that "the American empire ought to rest on the solid basis of THE CONSENT OF THE PEOPLE." No other structure of government "would be reconcilable with the genius of the people . . . or with the fundamental principles of the Revolution," proclaimed Madison.[6]

It was the shield of republican institutions, many delegates affirmed, which would protect society—and its natural leaders as well—from corruption. The republican principle demanded, said Hamilton, that a "deliberate sense of the community should govern the conduct" of those entrusted with "the management of their affairs." In the inevitable clash of interests, these leaders would rely on reason, not passion. The national interest would be the common and intelligent concern. Majorities in the government would shift from issue to issue and from policy to policy; order, stability, equilibrium, a natural harmony would result. "In the extended republic of the United States, and among the great variety of interests, parties, and sects which it embraces," Madison contended, "a coalition of a majority of the whole society could seldom take place on any other principles than those of justice and the general good. . . ."[7]

The eighteenth century understanding of the social structure from which leadership would rise was paradoxical. It presumed the inevitability of conflict among interests, yet it foresaw social stability resulting from the very complexity and balance of interests. The whole was conceived as arranging itself into a rather formal pattern, and within that formality the social graces and a degree of public spirit and virture could exist. Stability and ultimately liberty would be destroyed, however, if interests were transformed into political factions or parties which operated outside the social structure. One object of constitutional government, therefore, was the prevention of party. The Philadelphia debate over the proper method of choosing the president was addressed specifically to this problem.[8]

Edmund Randolph's Virginia Plan provided for a national executive to be chosen by the national legislature. Several delegates strenuously objected to the plan. James Wilson of Pennsylvania was concerned that such a dependent executive would be unable to mediate "between the intrigues and sinister views of the Representatives

and the general liberties and interests of the people." Another delegate believed that Randolph's proposal would foment the great evils of "cabal at home, and influence from abroad."[9]

During the next few weeks several alternative schemes for selecting a chief executive were debated. A plan to lodge the choice of a president directly in the hands of the people encountered roughly the same objections as the Randolph proposal. Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts considered the general populace unqualified to act "directly even in [the] choice ot electors." The people, he contended, were "too little informed of personal characters in large districts, and liable to deceptions." Another member warned that the people "will be led by a few active and designing men. The most populous States by combining in favor of the same individual will be able to carry their points." George Mason of Virginia deemed popular election for the presidency as unnatural as "to refer a trial of colours to a blind man." The size of the nation, he insisted, would make it impossible for the people to render a sagacious decision. There would be such a dearth of distinguished citizens who could be recruited as candidates, added Hugh Williamson of North Carolina, that each area would turn to its local favorites. The larger states in such an eventuality would dominate the presidency. Other delegates feared that popular election would throw the presidential appointment to organized groups, such as the Cincinnati, which would conspire to dominate the nation.[10]

On June 9 Gerry suggested that the president be chosen by the state executives. Several members objected. One delegate maintained that such a mode of election would, of necessity, split the states into coalitions based on particularistic interests. Madison pointed out that the Gerry plan would foster corruption among state governors who "could and would be courted, and intrigued with by the Candidates, by their partizans, and by the Ministers of foreign powers."[11]

Two additional proposals were introduced. A recommendation that the choice of a president be left to the state legislatures moved Madison to object that the legislatures would act in concert to promote the appointment of a man who would not oppose their mutual interests. One final scheme called for the president to be selected by lot from a small group of members of the House of Representatives. Although Morris supported the scheme and observed that "it would be better that chance should decide than intrigue," the lottery idea received little consideration.[12]

The question, after months of debate, remained unresolved. Finally, on August 31, the Convention created a committee of eleven, headed by Judge David Brearly of New Jersey, to bring in solutions on this and other "postponed matters." A few days later, the committee produced the electoral college plan for electing the president

which was amended and then accepted by the assembly. It required that each state legislature provide a number of electors equal to its congressional representation. Each electoral delegation was to meet within its state, cast ballots for two persons, one of whom could not reside in the state, and transmit the results to Congress to be counted. If no person received a majority of the electoral votes, the House of Representatives would choose from among the five highest on the list; each state contingent was to cast one vote, and a majority was required for election.[13]

The delegates' concern that presidential elections be protected from party intrigue and corruption was mirrored in the care with which they fixed the details of the electoral system once they had settled upon the basic plan. For example, the Convention cannily devised a method for choosing a president when no candidate received a majority of the electoral votes. It was first proposed that the Senate settle inconclusive elections. Wilson moved to strike the word "Senate" from the draft of the constitutional provision and substitute "Legislature." Since this alteration seemed to favor the large states at the expense of the small, Hugh Williamson of North Carolina suggested that in case of electoral deadlock the election should be resolved by the House of Representatives "voting *by States* and not *per capita*." Supporters emphasized that Williamson's plan would lessen the aristocratic influence of the Senate and reduce the possibility of corruption.[14]

Other provisions were added to shelter the election process and the electors from intrigues of Congressmen and federal office holders. On September 6, the Convention determined that no person would be appointed an elector who was a member of the Congress or who held an office of profit or trust under the United States. Furthermore, in the event of a contingent House election, the voting would begin immediately following the announcement of the electoral count. And while Congress was given some right to alter state regulations for elections to the lower House, the national legislature was to possess no comparable authority in the selection of presidential electors. To reduce the possibility of unwanted pressures on electors, a provision was included which required that all electors meet on the same day in their respective states. The electoral colleges, secure from the depredations of Congress, were now the preserve of the states; moreover, the prospect that a truly continental individual, free from cabal and corruption, would be selected to lead the republic seemed reasonably assured.[15]

Though the state ratifying conventions fully debated all sections of the new Constitution, for the most part they were quietly acquiescent toward the electoral scheme. The predominant opinion expressed

in the scattered debates on the system acknowledged that it constituted a sound safeguard against the dangers of faction, conspiracy, and intrigue.[16]

Of course, there were criticisms, mostly reflective of the same chronic fear of party. George Mason warned in the Virginia convention that an elective monarchy would develop in the absence of a provision for the rotation of the president. Mason believed that electors would be easily influenced. To "prevent the certain evils of electing a new president, it will be necessary to continue the old one," he lamented. James Monroe observed that in possessing the power to set the times for the choosing of electors and for electoral balloting, Congress would be able to spread the two dates so as to permit factions to influence the electors before they voted. The electoral scheme, another delegate claimed, would give the larger states perpetual power to elect the president and result in "a government of faction. . . ." At least one delegate, Rawlins Lowndes in the South Carolina ratifying convention, argued that through its very effectiveness, the electoral system would hinder the government. After Washington should pass from the scene, he maintained, no man would command the respect necessary to be elected and the government would falter. The system was also criticized on the grounds that it was designed to deceive the people into believing that they were actually making the selection. In fact, these critics maintained an electoral majority would be nearly impossible to attain, and most contests would be decided in the House, which would act counter to the popular will.[17]

Such doubts, however, were rare. Most delegates to the state conventions emphasized the advantages of the electoral college system. Indeed, the general acceptance of the proposal was cause for specific comment in *The Federalist*. "The mode of appointment of the Chief Magistrate," wrote Hamilton, "is almost the only part of the system . . . which has escaped without severe censure or which has received the slightest mark of approbation from its opponents." It "unites in an eminent degree all of the advantages the union of which was to be wished for."[18]

Although other factors no doubt played a role, the electoral plan seems to have won support because it was uniquely fitted to the ideological requirements of eighteenth century American politics and to the institutional demands of good government. Deeply suspicious of man's capacity to wield power wisely, a legacy of their study of the Whig interpretation of British history and the colonial experience, the delegates attempted to create authority and yet to reject what logic was forever trying to assign it: A single identifiable focus. The electoral college was one of the procedural restraints devised to frag-

ment destructive authority and to prevent any individual, party or institution from absorbing the whole of power. Resting upon the people, the ultimate source of sovereignty, and presenting as many federal as national features, it provided a mode for selecting a president from a constituency different from that of senators and congressmen. As part of the federal apportionment of powers, it secured the whole electoral process to the keeping of the states where the local choice of small intermediate groups of presidential electors was less apt to convulse the community than the selection of the chief magistrate by a large national electorate. Voting separately in their states, the electors were protected from pressures that might be exerted "if they were all to be convened at one time, in one place." Since the election would be made by a temporary group, convened separately for that one purpose, and purged of all who might have a specific interest in the final choice, the danger of corruption, and especially foreign intervention, was small. The votes of each state electoral college, "allotted to them . . . in a compound ratio, which considers them partly as distinct and coequal societies, partly as unequal members of the same society," were expected to result in a nationally distributed majority for a distinguished American who would stand above all interests. If no man received such a majority, the House of Representatives would render a comparable decision, for the members would "be thrown into the form of individual delegations from so many distinct and coequal bodies politic."[19]

Insulated against the tumult of disorder, the delicate task of choosing a chief executive would fall naturally to a wise group of dedicated public servants chosen in a manner predetermined by the social structure. "Those men only," wrote John Jay, "who have become the most distinguished by their abilities and virtue . . . ," would assume this obligation. Selected by the people for this singular purpose, they would feel a particular responsibility to the commonweal. Free from debilitating bias and possessing "extensive and accurate information relative to men and characters . . . ," they would act with reason; the choice, which was simultaneously individual and collective—federal and national—would fall naturally on a man acknowledged to embody the qualities of excellence, virtue, and integrity who would represent a real majority, not an organized majority. In both electors and president, the politics of deference would find its fitting republican representatives—disinterested, deliberative in temperament, virtuous, capable of transposing into a national unity the interests that combined to make the selection.[20]

Hamilton wrote:

> The process of election affords a moral certainty that the office of President will never fall to the lot of any man who

is not in an eminent degree endowed with the requisite qualifications. Talents for low intrigue, and the little arts of popularity, may alone suffice to elevate a man to the first honors in a single state; but it will require other talents, and a different kind of merit, to establish him in the esteem and confidence of the whole Union . . . to make him a successful candidate for the distinguished office of President of the United States.[21]

Widely, even enthusiastically accepted, the electoral college never functioned as planned and, with the rise of political parties, it assumed a new role which "has yet to be studied" and remains the source of heated debate. Yet the electoral system was the achievement of ideas which transcend its invention and history. The Founders had created a president with awesome power, but they aspired to protect liberty—both individual and collective—by filling the office with a responsible, honorable leader. Although their social and constitutional formula for generating such leadership soon eroded—a result, in part, of the new republic they had created—their undeniable conviction that the preservation of republican government demanded a presidential electoral system that would yield a worthy executive, free from intrigue and corruption, who could be trusted to exercise power without endangering constitutional guarantees, is the substance of the presidential politics of this bicentennial year.[22]

FOOTNOTES

[1] Max Farrand, *The Framing of the Constitution of the United States* (New Haven, 1913), 54-59; Clinton Rossiter, *1787: The Grand Convention* (New York, 1966), 135-55; James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Oct. 24, 1787, in Max Farrand, ed., *The Records of the Federal Convention* (New Haven, 1911), III, 32, 158; John P. Roche, "The Founding Fathers: A Reform Caucus in Action," *American Political Science Review*, LV (1961), 799-816. For an excellent bibliography on the electoral college, see Kalman S. Szekely, *Electoral College: A Selective Annotative Bibliography* (Littleton, Colo., 1970).

[2] These themes are developed in a number of important books and articles. See Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, "The Founding Fathers: Young Men of the Revolution," *Political Science Quarterly*, LXXVI (1961), 181-216; Robert W. Schoemaker, "'Democracy' and 'Republic' As Understood in Late Eighteenth-Century America," *American Speech*, XLI (1966), 83-95; Robert E. Shalhope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., III (1964), 1-35; Douglass G. Adair, "Experience Must Be Our Only Guide: History, Democratic Theory, and the United

States Constitution," in Ray A. Billington, ed., *The Reinterpretation of Early American History: Essays in Honor of John Edwin Pomfret* (San Marino, Cal. 1966), 129-148; Trevor Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience: Whig History and the Intellectual Origins of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1965); Stanley N. Katz, "The Origins of American Constitutional Thought," in Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn, eds., *Perspectives in American History* (Lunenburg, Vt., 1969), III, 474-490; Austin Ranney, *The Doctrine of Responsible Government* (Urbana, Ill., 1954); *The Federalist*, Intro. Clinton Rossiter (New York, 1961), No. 10, 77-84; Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, 1967); Jack P. Greene, "Political Mimesis: A Consideration of the Historical and Cultural Roots of Legislative Behavior in the British Colonies in the Eighteenth Century," *American Historical Review*, LXXV (1969), 337-360; Bernard Bailyn, "The Central Themes of the American Revolution," and Jack P. Green, "An Uneasy Connection," in Stephen G. Kurtz and James H. Hutson, eds., *Essays on the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1973), 3-80; Edmund S. Morgan, "The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., XXIV (1967), 3-43; Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition* (New York, 1960), 3-17; B.F. Wright, "The Federalist on the Nature of Political Man," *Ethics*, XLIX (1949), 1-31.

[3] Early in the eighteenth century some Americans expressed the view that parties could serve the needs of responsible government, but such ideas were clearly exceptional. See Bernard Bailyn, "The Origins of American Politics," in Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn eds., *Perspectives in American History* (Lunenberg, Vt., 1967), I, 96-98; Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of the Legitimate Opposition in the United States* (Berkeley, 1969), 1-73. A number of scholars have examined the deep political cleavages which were evident in most colonial and state legislatures to explain the nature of partisan politics before 1787. Jackson Turner Main has produced a number of interesting studies. See his "Political Parties in Revolutionary Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, LXII (1967), 1-27; "The Antifederalist Party," in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., ed., *History of American Presidential Elections, 1789-1968* (New York, 1971), I, 135-36; and *Political Parties Before the Constitution* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1973). See also Alison Gilbert Olson, *Anglo-American Politics 1660-1775* (New York, 1973); Stephen E. Patterson, *Political Parties in Revolutionary Massachusetts* (Madison, Wis., 1973).

[4] Charles S. Sydnor, *Gentlemen Freeholders: Political Practices in Washington's Virginia* (Chapel Hill, 1952), 60-77; David Hackett Fischer, *The Revolution of American Conservatism* (New York, 1965), 17-32; J.R. Pole, "Historians and Problems of Early American Democracy," *American Historical Review*, XLVII (April, 1962), 626-46; Lloyd I. Rudolph, "The Meaning of Party: From the Politics of Status to the Politics of Opinion in Eighteenth Century England and America," (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1956), 2-12; Harry Ammon, "The Jeffersonian Republicans in Virginia: An Interpretation," *Virginian Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXI (1963), 153-67; John B. Kirby, "Early American Politics—The Search for

Ideology: An Historigraphical Analysis and Critique of the Concept of 'Deference'," *The Journal of Politics*, XXXII (1970), 808-38; See also, Roy N. Lokken, "The Concept of Democracy in Colonial Political Thought," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., XVI (1959), 568-80; Richard Buel, Jr., "Democracy and the American Revolution: A Frame of Reference," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., XXI (1964), 169-90.

[5] *The Federalist*, No. 3, 43; No. 22, 152; No. 39, 240; No. 69, 414; No. 70, 424. Diamond argues that the Founders were typical of the disinterested class of political leaders who were expected to guide the new government. See Martin Diamond, "Democracy and *The Federalist:* A Reconsideration of the Framers' Intent," *American Political Science Review*, LIII (1959), 52-68. See also Alice Frey Emerson, "The Reality of the Concept of Public Interest: Examination of an Idea Within the Context of American Politics," (Ph.D. diss., Bryn Mawr College, 1964), 22-23; Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1969), 65-70; Paul Goodman, *The Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts* (Cambridge, 1964), 59-69; Fisher, *Revolution of American Conservatism*, 227; Rudolph, "Meaning of Party," 10-15.

[6] *The Federalist*, No. 22, 152; No. 39, 40. Although I have not focused on the clash of Federalists and Antifederalists over the Constitution, it is important to note that both were committed to republicanism and constitutionalism and that it was within this common framework of assumptions that differences arose. What form republican government should take and what embodied the essentials of a republican society—the kind of unity required for responsible government—were questions that generated bitter argument. Indeed, these differences were not resolved with the adoption of the Constitution and continued to provoke controversy in the first years of the new government. The writing on this period throws considerable light on the meaning of the Revolution. See Richard Buel, Jr., *Securing the Revolution: Ideology in American Politics, 1789-1815* (Ithaca, 1972); James M. Banner, Jr., *To the Hartford Convention: The Federalists and the Origins of Party Politics in Massachusetts, 1789-1815* (New York, 1970); Marshall Smelser, "The Federalist Period as an Age of Passion," *American Quarterly*, XIX (1967), 147-65; Lance Banning, "Republican Ideology and the Triumph of the Constitution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., XXXI (1974), 167-188. For insight into Antifederalist thought, see Cecelia M. Kenyon, "Men of Little Faith: The Anti-Federalists on the Nature of Representative Government," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., XII (1955), 3-43; Cecelia M. Kenyon, ed., *The Antifederalists* (Indianapolis, 1966), xcviii-vcix, vlviii; Eldon G. Bowman, "Patrick Henry's Political Philosophy," (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1961), 107; Jackson turner Main, *The Anti-Federalists: Critics of the Constitution, 1781-1788* (Chicago, 1964), 113.

[7] *The Federalist*, No. 50, 317; No. 52, 325; No. 64, 391; No. 71, 432.

[8] Douglass G. Adair, "That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science: David Hume, James Madison and the Tenth Federalist," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, XX (1957), 343-360; Arthur O. Lovejoy, "Theory of Human

Nature in the American Constitution and the Method of Counterpoise," in Jack P. Greene, ed., *The Reinterpretation of the American Revolution*, 1763-1789 (New York, 1968), 469-86. Although preparty politics was directed by and for local elites, the actual practice of colonial politics, particularly in urban centers, and the impact of the broad-based American protest after 1765, the forces unleashed by the Declaration of Independence, and the war that followed eroded old-school values by democratizing the political culture in ways never anticipated or intended. See Gary B. Nash, "The Transformation of Urban Politics 1700-1765," *Journal of American History*, LX (1973), 605-32; David Curtis Skaggs, "Maryland's Impulse Toward Social Revolution," *Journal of American History*, LIV (1968), 771-86; Merrill Jensen, "The American People and the American Revolution," *Journal of American History*, LVII (1970), 5-35; Main, *Political Parties Before the Revolution*, 15-17. For a provocative analysis of the "mutually inconsistent beliefs" that shape the American mind, see Robert G. McCloskey, "The American Ideology," in Marian D. Irish, ed., *Continuing Crisis in American Politics* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963), 10-25; Michael G. Kammen, *People of Paradox: An Inquiry Concerning the Origins of American Civilization* (New York, 1972).

[9] Farrand, *Records*, I, 28, 80; II, 30, 112.

[10] *Ibid.*, I, 80; II, 30-32. Gouverneur Morris argued, however, that popular election in such a large nation "could not be influenced, by those little combinations and those momentary lies which often decide popular elections within a narrow sphere." See *Ibid.*, II, 54. Formed in June, 1783, The Society of the Cincinnati was an organization of Continental Army officers. The Society aroused antagonism among groups that believed it was establishing an aristocracy. Further apprehension resulted when the group met in Philadelphia concurrently with the Constitutional Convention. See *Ibid.*, II, 114, 119.

[11] *Ibid.*, I, 181; II, 110.

[12] *Ibid.*, II, 103-105.

[13] *Ibid.*, II, 481, 496-500.

[14] *Ibid.*, II, 527. It was thought that the frequence of election to the House would free that body from "influence and faction to which the permanence of the Senate may Subject that branch." See *Ibid.*, 502.

[15] *Ibid.*, 521, 526. C.C. Pinckney of South Carolina "remembered very well that, *in the Federal Convention, great care was used to provide for the election of the President . . . independently of Congress, and to take the business, as far as possible, out of THEIR hands.*" See Jonathan Elliot, ed., *The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution* (Philadelphia, 1941), IV, 442. See also Charles A. O'Neil, The American Electoral System (New York, 1887), 12; Lucius Wilmerding, *The Electoral College* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1958), 16-17. "As the Electors would vote at the same time throughout the U.S. and at so great a distance from each other," stated Morris, "the great evil of cabal was avoided. It would be impossible to corrupt them." Farrand, *Records*, II, 500, 526.

[16] For example, see Elliot, *Debates,* II, 511-12; III, 150; IV, 122, 304-05.

[17] *Ibid.,* III, 484-485, 488, 492-493; IV, 288.

[18] *The Federalist,* No. 68, 411-12.

[19] *Ibid.,* No. 68, 412; No. 39, 244. See also Wood, *Creation of the American Republic,* 598.

[20] *The Federalist,* No. 64, 391; No. 68, 413-414. For similar arguments in the ratifying conventions, see Elliot, *Debates,* II, 321, 511-12; III, 485-86; IV, 58, 104, 106-07, 122, 304-05.

[21] *The Federalist,* No. 68, 414.

[22] Richard P. McCormick, "Political Development and the Second Party System," in William Nisbet Chambers and Walter Dean Burnham eds., *The American Party Systems* (New York, 1967), 110-11; Alexander Bickel, *The New Age of Political Reform* (New York, 1968), 5-20. Kenyon, ed., *The Antifederalists,* IV; Douglass Adair, "Fame and the Founding Fathers," in Edmund P. Willis, ed., *Fame and the Founding Fathers* (Bethlehem, Pa., 1967), 27-50.

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AS A LEADERSHIP CRISIS: THE VIEW OF A HARDWARE STORE OWNER

By
Barbara Ripel Wilhelm

When the American Revolution is discussed as an ideological movement, and when its philosophical themes are analyzed, almost inevitably the only names which appear in the innumerable texts are those of the esteemed leadership. The Founding Fathers of the new nation have been praised for their intellectual abilities and commended for their foresight. They are even thought to be national saints who very likely saved the populace from British tyranny and, perhaps, from the chaos of an American anti-authoritarian "rabble."

The debate about the motives, intentions and purposes of the Revolutionary leadership began almost as soon as the period itself faded into the constitutional debates. Contemporary Whigs and nineteenth century historians, however, frequently contended that if the revolutionaries were idealists they were far removed from the daily needs and mundane thoughts of the rest of the population. The "intellectual elite," according to the Progressive school of thought, related to American society through exaggerated propaganda which played the role of stirring the public on occasions requiring violent responses to British intervention in American politics—an intervention not clearly opposed to the interests of many Americans, but which surely attempted to limit the power of the colonial leaders. Thus, ideas and ideals were forged into tools through which the masses could be manipulated by a small cabal of scheming, self-interested colonists.

Even much of the recent scholarship, the so-called neo-Whig school, presents the Revolution primarily as a movement planned and executed by a leadership group which may have talked about the rights and liberties of all men but which did not really believe that most of the population could understand political philosophy. Bernard Bailyn, principal spokesman for this interpretation, has provided modern scholarship with an exciting discussion of the newspaper articles and pamphlets of the era. He states, in his *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, that the "leaders of colonial thought . . . forced forward alteration, or challenged, major concepts and assumptions of 18th century political theory." Newspaper articles and pamphlets were used to explain the "American

position" to the public and the ideas were discussed and simplified over and over again from the 1760's through the war period itself. The ideas presented, however, were always those which the leadership felt were important and unfortunately Bailyn provides no clear view as to how they were received. Surely the patriotic cause triumphed but many historians have contended that the ideology of the patriot leadership was merely a glorious rationalization for the interests of the upper class.[1]

Gordon Wood, in a recent article, has attempted to combine aspects of Progressive and neo-Whig historiography. He describes the leaders of the Revolutionary period as an elite which debated what they felt were the important philosophical questions. Still, Wood contests, these leaders were primarily interested in communicating with a narrow clique of "thoughtful persons" which barely included each other. Most of the elite saw the public as a useful political tool which had rights and liberties but which could be manipulated to approve a leadership which the elite deemed worthy. By 1776 that leadership meant the American patriots and not the British government.[2]

If, however, the only role the "common man" played in the development of Revolutionary ideology was in choosing sides and approving leaders, it must be made clear what kinds of thoughts he had—or indeed if he had any thoughts at all—about the leadership in colonial America. Historians often point out that little can be said about the thoughts of the "common man" in history since few such men leave any insightful recollections about their world. Some scholars have criticized the study of ideas, alleging that only the quantification of economic data permits a glimpse into the day-to-day activities of most of the people of the past. Yet, in this particular case, there is at least some evidence that the common man was thoughtfully concerned with the ideological issues of the American Revolution; long overlooked is a massive collection of Massachusetts, mostly Boston, newspapers assembled by a humble hardware store owner with the almost amusing name of Harbottle Dorr.[3]

In many ways Dorr is an unlikely person for the massive effort he undertook. The collection of almost 4,000 pages of text, plus an uncountable number of annotations in his handwriting, appears to be the only distinguishing feature of a man who seems otherwise quite common in Massachusetts, if not the total colonial population. Little is known of his personal background. His father probably died when Harbottle was about seventeen and the only inheritance Dorr managed to salvage from the debt-ridden estate was a small library of books. This inheritance probably influenced Dorr's later interest in a newspaper collection, but the literary character of the family was

quite narrow. It is probable that Dorr's mother was illiterate. With this inauspicious start, it took a combination of luck, ambition, and the rising economy of colonial Boston to produce a modest life-style for young Dorr but he did accumulate enough wealth to establish a hardware shop. Here, according to Dorr himself, he collected the newspapers and made the fascinating commentary during the quiet times of his business dealings.[4]

The collection, begun in 1765, was a conscious effort made by a man who saw his community badly influenced by tyrannical political policy most recently evidenced by the infamous Stamp Act. It ended in 1776 when the publication of Boston newspapers was terminated by British troops. It is clear that Dorr believed he was providing an important contribution to the future study of his era. Dorr chose to collect newspapers to make his point because he claimed they gave a "full Account of the Jealousies, great uneasiness, vast difficulties, and cruel Treatment of the Colonies by the Detestable Acts of Parliament." After organizing the papers into four volumes, Dorr set out to index them and make them useful to readers not familiar with the names and events of his day. There is no doubt that he had a wide knowledge of English law, history, and past and present politicians. He identified names, events, dates and acts of Parliament only vaguely referred to in the newspapers. His primary object seems to have been to make future readers aware of the "rightness" of the American cause; he does this by pointing out the "goodness" of the American patriot-leaders and the "badness," in a very moralistic sense of evil, of British and Tory leadership. In a determined effort to be comprehensive, Dorr went through the texts a number of times; some annotations were probably contemporary while others reveal that he was still working on his commentary during the war years. The fact that he refers to George Washington only as "General" and never as "President" seems to indicate that the editing was completed before 1789.[5]

Dorr's impressions about the political crises of the 1760's and 1770's were, of course, influenced by his own involvement in the patriot cause. He was an early member of the Sons of Liberty and a proud signers of the non-importation agreements. Those who did not agree and join with Dorr and his friends were immediately branded as bad, misled, and selfish men. Dorr had little use for their opinions about the appropriateness of British policy.[6] In 1776 Dorr proved that he believed the newspapers were a useful tool for reaching out to the people. He advertised in *The Continental Journal and Weekly Advertiser* for information about the British troops which allegedly plundered and robbed his shop. The personal suffering, which he said nearly amounted to his ruin, added to the tone of his annotations and

his belief that the American cause was righteous.[7] From 1777 to 1784, and 1786 to 1791, Dorr was a town selectman, an indication that his opinions were popular enough for him to win at least minor elections.[8]

In 1773 Dorr wrote a letter published by *The Boston Gazette* about colonial problems and the faulty leadership which had contributed to American difficulties with the mother country. The letter might have been a response to the publication of the correspondence between Governor Thomas Hutchinson and Thomas Whately, the exchange in which the American patriots saw definite proof of a pan-Atlantic conspiracy attacking the rights and freedoms of the colonists. The main topic of Dorr's message was a reproof against the clergy for not praying for a colonial leadership who would preserve American civil as well as religious liberties; Dorr warned that "when a people are deprived of their civil liberties, their religious ones are in danger." Surprisingly, for it was but 1773, Dorr called for a colonial union to offset "the calamities which threaten America," and he chastized the clergy for praying for leaders who "have been declared (explicitely or virtually,) TRAITORS to the country, not only by the people in general, but also by the highest authority among them." The role of the people in determining the policy of the leadership was basic, and Dorr defined good leaders as "the mouth of the people unto God."[9]

Dorr did not present a simple definition showing how to determine good leaders from the bad, but his comments about the actions of men in both America and England displayed some basic qualities which confirmed a dividing line. In general, men who operated upon what Dorr considered to be selfish principles for personal advancement, no matter what the cost, were evil "tools" and were to be driven out of any decent community. Governments which rewarded such self-interested men were also to be disregarded.When it became clear to Dorr that Great Britain rewarded those who hurt the American community, he decided that she had become too corrupt to be consulted in American affairs. Bad leaders, in very moralistic terms, were vain, traitorous, illiterate, uneducated, liars, slanderers, bigots, and enemies to the constitution.

Timothy Ruggles was one of Dorr's "bad men." He was a rescinder of the non-importation agreements and a proponent of British superiority over American rights. Dorr repeatedly remarked that Ruggles was an enemy of America, yet the corrupt British rewarded him with high office and lucrative salaries.[10] There were other comments noting the inferiority of British sympathizers. The Duke of Cumberland, no friend to America, was illiterate; and Governor Cooke of Rhode Island, also pro-British, had, in general, a low in-

telligence.[11] Other enemies also proved their depravity because they acted out of passions such as religious fanaticism. Dorr observed that the Bishop of Warburton was an enemy of America who based his hatred of the colonists on the fact that they were dissenters. Because of these misplaced feelings, Warburton, according to Dorr, voted against the repeal of the Stamp Act and, on the same prejudice, most of the other bishops in Parliament joined Warburton. Dorr accused the Bishop of Gloucester of slander for preaching a sermon in which he denounced the Americans as a people "ready to laugh at the Bible." Lord Hillsborough, Dorr commented, was a man who acted simply out of hatred and a desire to subvert the true constitution of the British empire. None of these men deserved respect, much less obedience. Dorr boldly asserted that when enemies of America died, their deaths "could be much lamented."[12]

By the great number of Dorr's comments against them, the most evil leaders in America were Francis Bernard and Thomas Hutchinson. As early as June, 1765, Dorr relished what he believed was the exposition of Bernard's true character, a traitor to the people of Massachusetts; and by November of the same year, he termed the governor as "implacable enemy" showing "implacable Enmity to this whole People and Constitution." In 1769, the year Bernard was recalled from the colony, Dorr compared him to Sir Edmund Andros as the most arbitrary governor in Massachusetts' history, correcting the newspaper remark about "that unparrelled Incendiary Governor Andros."[13]

Hutchinson, who succeeded Bernard as governor, also seems to have succeeded him as the main target of Dorr's criticisms. Dorr wrote that "Hutchinson . . . is a Tool to Ld. Hillsborough, Lord Hillsborough a Tool to Bute, and the Earl of Bute a Tool to the Devil." The sole motive behind Hutchinson's actions was his "lust for Ambition and Power" which caused him to attempt a selfish rule disregarding the needs of the colonists. Reading a comment printed in the newspaper that "the instructions of your constituents you should be always ready to obey," Dorr commented that his charge to officials was "Contrary to Govr. Hutchinson's opinion!" Dorr thought Hutchinson was a villain and a traitor, and certainly unworthy of any honest man's esteem. In one of Hutchinson's newspaper letters, the Governor acknowledged that he did not favor any "innovations" in the constitutional form of government, and Dorr retorted with a sarcastic "Hah! Hah!" written in large letters in the margin next to Hutchinson's remark. In a more serious tone, Dorr thought it was "to the Great Sorrow of all Friends to Liberty" when Hutchinson's official commission as governor of Massachusetts arrived in 1771. Even when a letter chastized Hutchinson for the selfish use of his

office and implied that such a person ought to commit suicide, Dorr dispassionately responded "It was reported Govr. Hutchinson attempted to cut his Throat." Dorr did try to maintain some ojectivity about Hutchinson, and, in 1769, when a letter referred to Hutchinson as the "herald of Slavery" Dorr felt the remark was "very Severe."[14]

Dorr could observe Bernard and Hutchinson very closely for they were members of his own community. Perhaps that explains why he was so harsh in his remarks about them; he might have subconsciously envied their success, power and wealth. Slowly, however, the judgements against these two men became signs of the corruption of the British administration and those who, along with Bernard and Hutchinson, favored British policy. If Dorr criticized Bernard and Hutchinson merely because of subjective jealousies, these emotions were translated only into politically-based censures and became part of his more extensive analysis of imperial politics. Dorr's verbal attacks became more and more centerd upon English villains. Although there were many references to "cursed" acts and "obnoxious" policies, Dorr repeatedly turned his attention to a severe condemnation of "the despotic, luxurious Ministry." Dorr was concerned about the continual and blatant lack of justice in England which was obvious in even the most insignificant cases. In one such episode, two brothers received a light sentence after murdering "a poor watchman;" the reason for their short imprisonment was that "their sister is mistress to some Noble Lord." Immorality, corruption, greed, the lust for power, and bad politics all had perverted the British ministry into evil acts. Dorr even claimed that the colonies had received "Popish Priests being paid from England" in an attempt to subvert American religious scruples. British politicians were caught up in a grand scheme to deprive the colonists of the rights and liberties they deserved to enjoy through their natural rights preserved in the true Constitution.[15]

With the ministry so corrupt, the King himself became a topic of Dorr's critical annotations. In 1772, the residents of Marblehead passed a strongly worded resolution about their own rejection of the notion that "the King himself is become an instrument in the hands of the ministry to promote their wicked purposes."[16] Dorr, however, disregarded the refutation and claimed "So it is." According to Dorr, a monarch had limited powers; it was, he thought, the people's duty to check acts that were clearly unconstitutional, and even at the risk of death or imprisonment, the people must oppose a tyrant. Dorr even implied that George III was a fool because he took so lightly a petition from the people of London.[17]

With all the villains on the Anglo-American scene, Dorr ought to have been very specific about the qualities of a good leader, but he is

less clear about this. The signs of goodness were, it seems, clouded even to Dorr, and he admitted that he sometimes erred in judging friends of America whom he later determined were really enemies. Dorr had dubbed Governor George Johnstone "a great Friend to America, to Great Britain: & to the rights of Mankind" and documented with various references to prove his early impression. The praises, however, had to be retracted for Johnstone turned out to be corrupt. He accepted a "bribe by being appointed one of the Commissioners in 1778, to settle the dispute with America: and was base enough to endeavour to bribe a member of Congress." There were other Americans who appeared good men while in the colonies but, when they went to England, fell under the spell of corruption and forsook the colonists.[18]

Dorr did find good men on both sides of the Atlantic and was complimentary to individuals rather than simply to the administrations or the nationalities they served. James Otis earned a position of respect in the colonies for his "candid declarations" and for "his truly Patriotic conduct in general." Samuel Adams, claimed Dorr, was incorruptible and "at the peril of his life, stood foremost in the post of danger." In England, Edmund Burke was "glorious Patriot;" the Earl of Buchan "a True Friend of Liberty and a Good Man;" and William Pym "a Glorious Son of Liberty" who died in the good Cause." Dorr even praised some monarchs and said that "king William was a good & a great Prince."[19]

These general approbations are too vague to form a precise picture of what Dorr might have included as the characteristics of a good leader. As a whole, an image has to be drawn from his views about the "bad men." The people had to be on guard to judge leaders who might surrender to avarice and the lust for power, both immoral passions which kept leaders from listening to the needs of their followers. Good men did *not* accept rewards from corrupt governments. Hutchinson had acted improperly when he had accepted positions and pensions from the ministry in exchange for the implementation of evil policies. Dorr even considered that the great William Pitt might have been tempted by the passion for personal glory when he accepted a peerage; the Bostonians seemed to agree, for they were delaying the erection of a statue to Pitt's honor because of the possibility that his new rank was a bribe. A good man, Dorr believed, had to act independently even at the risk of his future. He complimented Joseph Greenleaf who was deprived of his office of Justice of the Peace because he did not attend "the Illegal summons of the Govr. and Council."[20]

Good leadership was tied to good government and the conformance to an ethic which society had chosen to follow, rules which should

benefit the community as a whole, not merely a few individuals. This philosophy was printed over and over in Revolutionary literature, and Dorr must have been influenced by its message. In 1771 he read:

> The multitude I am speaking of, is the body of the people—no contemptible multitude—for whose sake government is instituted; or rather, who have themselves erected it, solely for their own good—to whom even kings and all in subordination to them, are strictly speaking, servants and not masters. The constitution and its laws are the basis of the public tranquility—the firmest support of the public authority, and the pledge of the liberty of the citizens.

This was not new to Dorr and he commented that "this is orthodox and is *my* Political Creed."[21] The people were the proper creators and also the objects of government; leaders rose from their ranks and for their benefit. Bad leaders caused great unrest in societies and the people were justified to take any action to unseat them. Dorr even claimed that "Mobbs, or Riots are never without some Cause," and that cause was almost always selfish, greedy and unresponsive leadership.[22]

As Dorr looked upon his town and country, the tranquility of the colonies had certainly been disturbed by the poor leadership of the British empire. When actual warfare broke out between the mother country and the colonies, it was obvious that he not only believed British policy to be wrong but that this policy had been composed by evil men with depraved motives. These leaders had disregarded the colonists' needs and had done little to help the American people. Leaders who were specifically rejected by Americans had been rewarded by the English ministry. One outstanding example of this was when the colonists had imprisoned Thomas Dudley for his cooperation with the hated Andros and the ministry had then appoined Dudley Governor of Massachusetts. Time and again the British politicians had passed acts which were distressing, obnoxious, enslaving, fatal and, above all, unwanted by Americans. This bad leadership was condemned for both its moral and political improprieties. Americans sent petitions, resolves, and representatives to England to demonstrate that they would not give up their liberties. Still there was no remedy and "at length the sword was drawn by the Ministerial Butchers—whereby G. Britain lost her Colonies."[23]

> The consequences for the English were disastrous. No doubt Britain, instead of preserving her liberty by the *virtue* of America, had lost it by that *means,* as by the virtue of America, she separated from G. Britain, which no doubt in the sequel, will ruin her i.e. G. Britain.[24]

Both Dorr and the leaders of the American cause dwelt on the notion that the virtuous Americans had only stood firm against the corrupt British and were forced into preserving their rights. As early as 1765, Dorr had marked a newspaper passage which advised that if Americans had to choose between their relationship with Britain and their "most valuable natural rights", they had no choice but that of independence.[25]

Thus the new nation, as Dorr saw it, was born out of a confrontation between the corruption of the leadership of Great Britain and the virtuous people of America. The United States now was the best, and perhaps only, voice of the "English" constitution. Americans had become the only "true Englishmen." Having refused to submit to the temptations of power and greed, Americans lived in a happy, peaceful place with leaders who cared for their needs.[26]

Dorr had great respect for the leaders he approved as good men. It was his impression that these rulers rose out of the people as a result of their unselfishness. For such efforts they earned a supreme prize.

> There is no pleasure in this life, besides a good conscience, equal to that resulting from the just esteem of ones country founded on a sincere desire of serving it, & of having strained every nerve for that purpose.[27]

These opinions put Dorr's thesis about American revolutionary society at odds with those of Professor Wood, for Dorr saw no basic division into an exclusive elite and the "vulgar." He saw American society as a unit. Leaders listened to the people and if they did not represent them and act on their needs, the people responded by replacing them. The goals as well as the meaning of the American Revolution were shared by the entire American people.

> No doubt if our Morals are pure, and if we have the same sacred regard to liberty which [we] have at present (now we are independent of Great Britain) we shall [be] the glory of all lands & there will be no one hurting or destroying. . . .[28]

If Dorr was taught this rhetoric by a disdaining elite which sought to use the populace only to maintain its own power, the teaching was so effective Dorr never recognized the plot. From the outset of his commentary Dorr indicated that he had long believed many English politicians and policies sought the destruction of American liberties. Although Dorr probably learned to read in some public school, there is no evidence that he had much formal education. The "school" in which he learned history and constitutional law was the society in which he lived. It is true that the newspapers were filled with Whig

"propaganda," but editors merely published material which would attract people to purchase the weekly sheets—paper and print were too expensive to waste on superficialities. The subject matter of the columns was regarded not only as relevant but useful in understanding the world around those who read them.

These conclusions place limits on the interpretations that the intellectual stance of the American patriots was actually shared by a small number. Ideas may of course be used as rationalizations for other needs and incentives, but Dorr's commentary totally lacks any suspicion about less idealistic motives of the patriot leadership. He gave his respect to men who shared a common set of ideals with him, not with those whom he suspected might force ideas upon him. For Dorr there was no division of society into intellectuals and the vulgar, but into the good men and the bad. Some historians may present Revolutionary rhetoric as a tool used by the leaders to attract a following, but Dorr did not see any choice in the kind of leaders he would follow.

Harbottle Dorr was not a member of any kind of intellectual elite nor even a prominent member of his community. When he died in 1794, the Boston newspapers mentioned his passing in short lists of others who had died about the same time, but no fanfare about his principles was made.[29] There was little that was special about him, but there can be no doubt, after reading through his newspaper commentary, that he fully believed the American Revolution to be an idealistic preservation of rights and freedoms, and good leadership.

FOOTNOTES

[1] For an excellent discussion of Revolutionary historiography see Gordon S. Wood, "Rhetoric and Reality in the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, XXIII (January, 1966), 3-32; Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1967).

[2] Gordon S. Wood, "The Democratization of Mind in the American Revolution," *Leadership in the American Revolution* (Washington, 1974), 62-83.

[3] *The Harbottle Dorr Collection of Annotated Massachusetts Newspapers*, microfilm edition, Massachusetts Historical Society. Hereafter cited *H.D.*, volume number, and pagination by Dorr.

[4] For biographical information about Dorr, see H.D. I, typescript at the beginning of the volume; and Bernard Bailyn, "The Index and Commentaries of Harbottle Dorr," Massachusetts Historical Society, *Proceedings*, LXXXV (1953), 21-35.

[5] H.D., II, 2-3; III, unnumbered first page. for clues showing Dorr made his comments either contemporary to the newspapers or during the war, see *H.D.*, I, 216; IV, 583, 734; and Bailyn. *Ideological Origins.*

[6] Dorr repeatedly accused John Mein, publisher of *The Boston Chronicle*, of using his newspaper to defeat the non-importation agreements. See for example, *H.D.*, II, 735.

[7] *H.D.*, IV, 966; the advertisement appeared on July 4, 1776.

[8] *H.D.*, I, typescript at the beginning; Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 22.

[9] *H.D.*, IV, 359; Dorr later affixed his signature to the article and thus claimed it as his own composition. The quoted reference to "TRAITORS" is almost definitely an accusation against Hutchinson for his letters to Whately.

[10] *H.D.* I, 258, 354, 372, 396; III, 273, 276, 281.

[11] *H.D.* III, 284; IV, 710, 1057.

[12] *H.D.* I, 393, 462, 574, 635, 640; II, 74, 100, 262, 465.

[13] *H.D.* I, 95, 265, 269; II, 476, 577, 663; IV, 324.

[14] *H.D.* I, 580; II, 288, 297, 657; III, 253, 345, 363, 377, 418, 456, 469; IV, 321, 324, 435, 1156.

[15] *H.D.* I, 314, 616; II, 424, 464; III, 489; IV, 466, 827.

[16] *H.D.* IV, 205.

[17] *H.D.* II, 551; III, 142, 206, 568; IV, 293, 318.

[18] *H.D.* I, 230; II, 637; IV, 999. In May, 1778, Johnstone tried to bribe Joseph Reed, Robert Morris and Francis Dana to agree to a peace negotiation with the British and forestall an alliance with the French.

[19] *H.D.* I, 180, 217, 223, 295, 320, 398, 636; II, 659; III, 32; IV, 139, 750, 1198.

[20] *H.D.* I, 399; III, 631.

[21] *H.D.* III, 370.

[22] *H.D.* III, 302.

[23] *H.D.* I, 53, 353, 433, 467, 700, 719; IV, 708, 762.

[24] *H.D.* IV, 1250.

[25] *H.D.* I, 114.

[26] H.D. II, 425, 576, 659; III, 75, 177; IV, 420.

[27] *H.D.* I, 80.

[28] *H.D.* IV, 1084. The text unfortunately fades and the final words are illegible; the bracketed insertions are the logical completion of the torn edge of the page.

[29] *The Boston Gazette and Weekly Republican Journal*, (June 9, 1794); *The Columbian Centinel* (June 7, 1794).

FROM PRAGMATIC ACCOMMODATION TO PRINCIPLED ACTION: THE REVOLUTION AND RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT IN VIRGINIA

By
Mary E. Quinlivan

The significance of the American Revolution in the history of religious establishment in Virginia lies as much in the encouragement of public discussion of the contribution of religion and religious establishment to social order as it does in the actual adoption of Thomas Jefferson's bill for religious freedom in 1786. In the decades prior to the Revolution, Virginia underwent religious change more penetrating than that which occurred between 1776 and 1786. The introduction of various dissenting groups during the second quarter of the eighteenth century on the frontier, the advent of the Great Awakening, and the subsequent rise of the Baptists in all parts of Virginia in the next quarter century were substantive changes in the religious character of the colony unequaled by developments during the Revolution. But the Revolutionary situation, which commenced in 1776, provided the opportunity to move from pragmatic accommodation to principled action.

During the years following the outbreak of the Revolution, the General Assembly of Virginia gradually ended the special relationship which had existed between the Church of England and the civil government. The Declaration of Rights of 1776 contained a broad assertion of religious liberty; the assembly then began to spell out the meaning of that liberty. Penal legislation requiring religious uniformity and church attendance was repealed. Taxation of dissenters for the benefit of the Anglican church was abolished in 1776 and all levies for the support of the clergy was suspended annually until abolished in 1779.

Vestiges of the Anglican establishment remained, however, in the vestry and marriage laws throughout the Revolution. The vestries, to which dissenters could not legally belong, were empowered to tax parish members and dissenters alike for the care of the poor. In 1781 dissenting ministers were authorized to perform marriages. The law, however, did not put dissenting ministers on a par with the clergy of the Anglican church, for only four ministers of each dissenting denomination in a county were given authority to perform marriages within the bounds of that county alone. Petitions asking for the generalized dissolution of vestries and the election of overseers of the

poor and for the further liberalization of the marriage laws went unheeded by the assembly.

At the same time that dissenters complained about the vestigial remains of the old establishment, they were aware of a movement for the building of a multiple establishment through a general assessment for the Christian religion. Its proponents suggested that the state collect a direct tax for religion from all taxpayers, each designating to which church he wanted his payment assigned. Although this general assessment movement was unsuccessful, it was neither a reactionary phase of the Revolution nor an expedient by a religious group which preferred a single establishment. The movement resulted from intense emphasis on the social importance of religion. Its adherents believed that religion's positive effect on the social order justified its support by the state; moreover, they believed, the likelihood that religion would decline without state assistance necessitated such support.

There has been general agreement among historians that the principal religious development of the Revolution was the movement from expedient toleration of certain groups of dissenters towards separation of church and state and that the experience of Virginia was salient. In his classic, *The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement,* J. Franklin Jameson traced the movement as part of the Revolution's effect upon thought and feeling. In a recent essay on the role of religion in the Revolution, William McLoughlin emphasized the importance of the Revolution in continuing the dissolution of colonial religious establishments—a development set in motion by the Great Awakening—and in creating "religious liberty for Protestantism in order to provide the cultural cohesion needed for the new nation."[1]

Numerous specialized studies have contributed to the understanding of the specific developments in Virginia. Much of the historical treatment of the assessment issue is in denominational chronicles written by nineteenth century historians, primarily Presbyterian and Baptist clergymen. Their tendency to claim glory or lay blame decreases their value but, because of the important evidence and insights they contain, many of these studies are indispensable.[2] The major twentieth century study is that by Hamilton J. Eckenrode, *Separation of Church and State in Virginia: A Study in the Development of the Revolution.*[3] His work, a compendium of documents and a narrative of the separation of church and state, is helpful for gaining an understanding of the assessment movement. His labeling of "conservative" and "radical" groups and policies is, however, somewhat misleading. Because he failed to study the pre-Revolutionary thought on church-state alliance, Eckenrode viewed the

general assessment movement as essentially a reaction against the Revolution. He did not recognize it as an expression of the continuing concern with the social relevance of religion or of divergent views of the meaning of the Revolution. His failure to note Patrick Henry's pre-Revolutionary espousal of the civil utility of religion led him to interpret Henry's leadership in the assessment movement as simply an expression of his "growing conservatism."

Eckenrode's interpretation was criticized in an excellent article by Marvin K. Singleton, who stressed that at the opening of the Revolution the assessment question was explicity left for later deliberation. Singleton believed that Henry's submission of the assessment bill "was in itself not necessarily reactionary or opportunistic". Henry's "retrospective view of the issue, though mistaken and troublesome, was not an unnatural sort of mistake to fall into during the 1780's, when the values of the Revolution had not yet fully jelled into principles of good government."[4] Singleton's interpretation of Henry's role in the assessment controversy is marred only by his failure to note the continuity in Henry's concern for the civil usefulness of religion at the time of the Parsons' Cause and later in the movement to preserve religious establishment.[5]

The changes which were made in the position of the Church of England in Virginia and the theorizing which was done on the role of religious establishment during the American Revolution must be seen in the context of church-state relations in the preceding decades. This paper, therefore, seeks to explain that context and the significance of the General Assembly's invitation to open discussion of views concerning religious establishment during the Revolution.

The argument of the civil utility of religion which formed the rationale for the general assessment proposals of the 1770's and the 1780's was not a new argument. Based on the writings of William Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester, it formed the justification for the alliance of church and state in pre-Revolutionary Virginia. Warburton's works were a Whig's effort to justify an established church through an analysis of the nature of society.[6] His expressed purpose was not to defend the establishment of any particular church or creed, but rather to show that an established church of some sort is necessary for the well-being of any community. His first step was to examine the nature of civil and religious societies and the purposes for which they exist. He held that state and church are independent societies, each with its particular purposes and functions; the two entered into such an alliance for their mutual benefit. The state, which originated through social compact, has for its end "security to the temporal liberty and property of man." It has no interest in securing man's future happiness; the magistrate can be concerned

only with the bodies, not the souls of men. The magistrate cannot punish offenses because they are sins but because they are crimes, actions which have a malignant influence on society. The state must not concern itself with religious opinions other than the "three fundamental principles of Natural Religion: the being of a God, his providence over human affairs, and the natural essential difference of moral good and evil." The state's interest in these basic principles is from a political, not a religious motive. They are necessary to give sanction to an oath, and are thus the bond of civil society.

Although Warburton emphasized the distinction between the functions of these two societies, he held that all alliance between them is beneficial and natural. The state needs the aid of the church to give it a powerful sanction for the observance of its own laws and to secure the performance of certain duties of imperfect obligation. The church needs the state for protection from external violence. In the alliance that is formed the church gives up her independence to the state. Warburton's rationale for state establishment of religion was basically that of civil utility, a rationale dangerously close to the Erastianism which he abhorred. He did not want religion to be considered the creation or the tool of the state. Nevertheless in his theory the church—and the clergy—necessarily played a subsidiary role in its alliance with the state despite an independent and peculiarly spiritual function of preparing men for eternal life.

Warburton's writing, particularly *The Alliance between Church and State* (1736 and *The Divine Legation of Moses* (1737-1741), were well known in Virginia and were frequently cited by participants in pre-Revolutionary discussions of the church-state relationship. In most of these discussions there were few who questioned whether there ought to be a close relationship between church and state. Rather, the discussions generally centered on such issues as the usefulness to the colony of certain groups of dissenters and the actual contribution to social cohesion made by the Church of England, particularly by its clergy who were frequently described in perjorative terms.

The role of the clergy within the church-state alliance was a basic concern in the Parsons' Cause of the 1750's and 1760's. In this conflict some of the clergy protested against what they claimed was an illegal devaluation of their salaries through the Two Penny Acts. The faction of the clergy which was involved in the controversy believed that the temporary commuting of their salaries from tobacco to money at a time when the fluctuation in the price of tobacco would have been to their advantage would lead to the "ruin of the Established Church." They expressed their views to the Bishop of London: "For what Clergyman can it be expected will come hither from Great Britain, or who will here design their sons for

holy Orders, when the Clergy shall not be paid in one certain commodity, but in Tobacco or Money or something else, as any of them shall happen to be the least profitable. . . & when they shall be supported in a penurious manner or starved outright."[7]

This group considered the commutation an attack upon the clergy and thus on the existing religious establishment. They did not wish to have a subservient role in Virginia society. According to one of the protesting clergy, James Maury, there had been a "long Train of public measures" designed for purposes of "reducing & degrading the Church from a federal Equality & Alliance with the State, it's indubitable Right by the British Constitution, to an abject Vassalage & servile dependence on it."[8] Clearly Reverend Maury believed that at the heart of the Parsons' Cause was the question of the proper locus of authority in the church-state alliance. He and the other protesting clergy wanted a sure and adequate income which would permit them an independent voice; they wanted a minimum of lay control in the church. In this way, religion and religious establishment could best serve society. Their adversaries believed that the clergy should play a supportive role to the state. Lay control would help assure the proper functioning of the clergy within the alliance.

In the case in which he defended the parish sued by Reverend Maury, Parick Henry dramatically expressed the importance of an established church and the deviation of Virginia's clergy from their proper role. His argument concerning the role of religious establishment dealt exclusively with its civil utility. Its purpose is to "enforce obedience to civil sanctions, and the observance of those which are called duties of imperfect obligation." If the clergy failed to fulfill this function, society "may justly strip them of their appointments." Henry characterized the Virginia clergy as "rapacious harpies [who] would, were their powers equal to their will, snatch from the hearth of their honest parishioner his last hoe-cake, from the widow and her orphan children their last milch cow! The last bed, nay, the last blanket from the lying-in woman!" Because the clergy in the Parsons' Cause had counteracted the purposes of their alliance with the state, they ought to be considered as "enemies of the community" rather than as "useful members of the State."[9]

Soon after the Parsons' Cause had ceased to be of great interest to Virginians, a new controversy, that of the American episcopate, gained attention in the colony. In 1771, as a result of pressure from representatives of the United Convention of the Clergy of New York and New Jersey, Virginia's Commissary, James Horrocks, called two meetings of the Virginia clergy to discuss the feasibility of petitioning the King for the creation of a colonial episcopate. Although attendance at both meetings was extremely sparse, a majority of the

twelve clergymen present at the second meeting decided to prepare a petition to the king requesting the establishment of the episcopate. This petition was to be approved first by the majority of the Virginia clergy and then by the Bishop of London before being presented to the king. Four of the twelve clergymen present voted against this plan of action. Two of them, Thomas Gwatkin and Samuel Henley, published a formal statement against the action in the *Virginia Gazette.*[10] Although they collaborated on the statement in the *Gazette,* it became apparent as time went on that Gwatkin and Henley held quite different views on the concept of the church-state alliance.

Gwatkin wrote to the clergy of New York and New Jersey in response to their criticism of the Virginia clergy's lack of support for the American episcopate. Explicitly declining to engage in a "philosophical dispute concerning establishment in general," he based his argument concerning the clerical role in the Virginia establishment on the theories of Warburton. He showed that the discussion of an American episcopate was necessarily a different question in Virginia from what it was in those colonies in which the Church of England was not already established by law. In Virginia, said Gwatkin, the Clergy had connected itself with the government and consequently had surrendered its right to make alterations without the approbation of the civil authorities. The Virginia House of Burgesses had seen the northern clergy's "scheme" in its proper light and foresaw its "mischievous tendency" of separating the interests of the clergy from those of society. Gwatkin believed that for reasons of civil utility, the clergy of an established church must play a subordinate role. In that position, they were unable to effect basic changes in the ecclesiastical constitution without express legislative consent.[11]

Although most of those who objected to the American episcopate challenged neither the concept of episcopacy in general nor the alliance of church and state, Samuel Henley implicitly questioned episcopacy and explicity condemned the accepted theory underlying the church-state alliance. In doing so, he came into open conflict with the staunch lay supporter of Virginia's religious establishment and the Treasurer of Virginia, Robert Carter Nicholas. During 1773 and 1774 these two men aired diametrically opposed views, providing the fullest pre-Revolutionary debate on the role of religion and religious establishment in society.

Because Nicholas, as an important vestryman of Bruton Parish in Williamsburg, had kept Henley from a permanent appointment as rector of the parish, Henley published a letter in the *Virginia Gazette* of May 13, 1773, challenging Nicholas to bring his charges against Henley into the open. In various issues of the *Gazette,* Nicholas indi-

cated that his objections centered on Henley's stand on the American episcopate, his doctrinal latitudinarianism, and, most particularly, his view of the church-state alliance.

In March, 1772, Henley preached a sermon on the church-state relationship which he later had printed. The ideas developed in this sermon were at the heart of the Nicholas-Henley dispute. Henley spoke at length on the origin of the social compact and its relation to religion in society. He thought society was founded on purely human motives, primarily the security and enjoyment of property. The magistrate's basic duty is to preserve the peace and property of the members of society. He recognized that much confusion can arise in connection with this concept because some things which are against God's laws are also violation of the state's laws, but he added that although violation of a civil law might "involve in it a violation of the Law of God, it is cognizable before the Magistrate in no other light than as a civil offence, since in no other view can it be injurious to society."

Henley believed that although society and government were founded on purely human motives and religion played no role in the formation of either, religion inevitably "looks with a benign aspect upon civil polity . . . since the conduct it enjoins tends greatly to advance man's secular welfare." This, however, was not the primary purpose of religion, and Henley was unwilling to have religion's role reduced to that of civil utility. The authority of religion was anterior to every political establishment and binding upon every individual: "Human law could not more give it effect than extent." Man must be free to follow his conscience, for "our duty to our Maker is coeval with our being." No matter how desirable uniformity in religious opinions may appear, to make nonconformity criminal is "highly impious." The establishment of religious doctrines on the authority of the state would be useless; unless they are actually believed they are ineffective. The most sacred dogmas would be "but human prescriptions" to those who were not convinced of their divine nature. Legislation enjoining public worship is equally foolish, for "can a legal injunction excite the spirit of devotion?" Religion is not in need of legislative support by the state any more than the movement of sun and moon are dependent on the state.[12]

The House of Burgesses was the congregation to whom this sermon was preached on March 1, 1772. Although there is no record indicating fully the circumstances under which this sermon was prepared and delivered, Henley's choice of subject matter and his manner of handling it are significant. At the time of the delivery of this sermon religious questions were of great importance in the deliberations of the House of Burgesses. As a result of numerous

petitions from Baptists and others, a religious toleration bill had been given a second reading and referred back to the Committee for Religion on the Friday prior to the delivery of the sermon. It seemed to Henley an appropriate time for a sermon on the text, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Although he made some practical application of his theory in the latter part of his sermon, most of the address was a philosophical treatise on the origin and interrelationships of society, the state, and religion. Henley was not dealing with the establishment of religion as it existed in Virginia; nor did he suggest modifications to the burgesses. Rather, he was questioning *in toto* the concept of religious establishment.

In his criticism of Henley, Nicholas made no attempt to philosophize on the social compact or the distinction between the purposes of church and state. Rather, he said that if *he* were a minister he would consider it his duty to show the "superior Advantages of our Establishment, and the various and striking Beauties of our Liturgy." Such preaching would strengthen those who were already members of the church and would attract strangers as well. But Henley seemed to Nicholas to have had as his purpose "to beat down and destroy that necessary, that friendly and amiable Alliance between Church and State, which the best and ablest Divines have thought essential to the Prosperity of both."[13]

Henley objected to Nicholas's statement that the most revered clergymen had considered the alliance between church and state essential. In determining his mental list of able divines, Henley noted, Nicholas must have excluded all the reformers of the English Church of the previous century and a half and all the current bishops of the Church of England except "his Lordship, of Gloucester [William Warburton]." Henley held that the theory that the alliance between church and state was essential to both was "of but few Years existence and was begotten on a Fondness for Novelty by the creative Imagination of a paradoxical Theologue [Warburton]."[14]

Thus within the established church itself, on the eve of the Revolution, there was significant public airing of opposing views concerning the role of religious establishment. This diversity, combined with the changes brought about by the growth of the Presbyterians and, more dramatically, the Baptists—who espoused a theological basis for disestablishment—produced a fluid situation concerning religious establishment at the opening of the Revolution.

It is not surprising that in dealing with this confusing, uncertain situation, the assembly temporized in 1776; and during the ensuing years, in spite of a liberal statement on religious liberty in the Virginia Declaration of Rights, serious consideration was given to

proposals for a general assessment. Such proposals were in accord with the theorizing which had buttressed the establishment of the Church of England and which readily could be applied to a broader kind of religious establishment. By specifically delaying a judgment on the value of a general assessment in its December, 1776, suspension of the legislation, which had provided for clerical salaries; and by giving serious consideration to general assessment bills in 1779 and 1784, the assembly explicitly demonstrated its lack of consensus on the role of religious establishment.

In each instance in which it postponed definite action, the assembly stated that it would delay until public opinion might be better known. This deference to public opinion is a significant aspect of the Revolution in Virginia, and the responses it elicited indicated a generalized concern for the welfare of society in Virginia. No longer was religious establishment to be taken for granted. Nor was the theorizing on the role of religion something to be reserved to those in power—whether church or state. Rather, there could be generalized public discussion and petitioning which could influence legislation.

In the course of this discussion and petitioning, many of the same ideas which had been emerged in the more limited pre-Revolutionary discussions were expressed. The proponents of a general assessment argued primarily from a civil viewpoint, stressing the close relationship between religious establishment and general social stability. They believed that establishment was necessary to guarantee the growth of the type of religion which would contribute to civil order. The opponents of assessment stressed the distinctive origin and functions of church and state to show that only harm could come to each through their alliance. Few, however, expressed a starkly secular concept of society. Most believed that religion could effectively contribute to social well-being if it were left free of alliance with the state.

A full appreciation of the Revolution as a social movement in Virginia must include an understanding of the uncertainty concerning the future of religious establishment in 1776, the continuity of pre-Revolutionary thought on the church-state alliance with that expressed in support of general assessment, and the significance of the enlivened public discussion and petitioning elicited by the assembly in its attempt to base the institutions of Virginia on proper principles.

FOOTNOTES

[1] J. Franklin Jameson, *The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement* (Princeton, 1926), 85-90. William McLoughlin, "The Role of Religion in the Revolution: Liberty of Conscience and Cultural Cohesion in the New Nation," in Stephen G. Kurtz and James H. Hutson, eds., *Essays on the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1973), 255.

[2] William H. Foote, Sketches of *Virginia, Historical and Biographical* (Philadelphia, 1864); Robert B. Howell, *The Early Baptists of Virginia*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia, 1864); Charles F. James, *Documentary History of the Struggle for Religious Liberty in Virginia* (Lynchburg, Va., 1900); Robert B. Semple, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia*, rev. and extended by G.W. Beale (Richmond, 1894).

[3] Hamilton J. Eckenrode, *Separation of Church and State In Virginia: A Study in the Development of the Revolution*, Special Report of the Department of Archives and History, Virginia State Library (Richmond, 1910).

[4] Marvin K. Singleton, "Colonial Virginia as First Amendment Matrix: Henry, Madison, and Assessment Establishment," *A Journal of Church and State*, VIII (Autumn, 1966), 361.

[5] *Ibid.*, 362. Singleton saw in Henry "a certain lack of fixed principle evidenced by the contrast between his Two-Penny position and his assessment views."

[6] This discussion of Warburton's views is based on Arthur W. Evans, *Warburton and the Warburtonians: A Study in Some Eighteenth Century Controversies* (London, 1932).

[7] The Clergy of Virginia to the Bishop of London, November 29, 1755, in William S. Perry, ed., *Historical Collections Relating to the American Colonial Church* (Hartford, Conn., 1870), I, 434.

[8] MS letter of James Maury, October 25, 1759, in the Maury Family Papers, University of Virginia Library.

[9] The quotations are from a summary of Henry's argument given in William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry: Life, Correspondence and Speeches* (New York, 1891), I, 40-41.

[10] Purdie and Dixon's *Virginia Gazette*, June 6, 1771.

[11] Thomas Gwatkin, *A Letter to the Clergy of New York and New Jersey, Occasioned by an Address to the Episcopalians of Virginia* (Williamsburg, 1772), *passim.*

[12] Samuel Henley, *The Distinct Claims of Government and Religion, a Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Burgesses at Williamsburg in Virginia, March 1, 1772* (Cambridge, 1772), *passim.*

[13] Purdie and Dixon's *Virginia Gazette*, Supplement, May 20, 1773.

[14] Purdie and Dixon's *Virginia Gazette*, June 3, 1773.

JONATHAN BOUCHER: THE LOYALIST AS REBEL

By
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"There was nothing quite ordinary or indifferent about me," Jonathan Boucher noted with self-consciousness and a touch of pride. "My faults and my good qualities were all striking. All my friends (and no man ever had more friends) really loved me; and all my enemies as cordially hated me." The accuracy of Boucher's statement grew as the years passed. For if Boucher's contemporaries were perhaps less struck by the extremities of his personality and his private history than he imagined, historians of the Revolutionary era have hardly been indifferent. Unlike other exiles and refugees, he has not suffered the ignominity of oblivion; rather he has served as the symbolic Loyalist, alternately praised as a true defender of King, country, church, and social order, or vilified as a social elitist and political reactionary. Much of Boucher's appeal has seemed to be the promise of clarity: here is a man who could, after all, be pinned down. His political attitudes could be traced directly to Sir Robert Filmer. His social conservatism was linked to his class. His loyalty to the Crown was a logical product of his English birth and his institutional affiliation with the Church. Whether praised or condemned, Jonathan Boucher could at least be said to be understood, and insofar as historians sought to understand the Loyalists, this was sufficient.[1]

Yet if history does not change, historians do. The Loyalists are today rescued from oblivion, and any search for the nature and causes of the Revolution is admitted to require an examination of the opposition as much as the movement itself. Thus as the Revolution becomes more complex and richer in texture, the temptation to write about Jonathan Boucher for all the old reasons remains: in the confusing variations of motivation, material circumstances, self-perception, and political ideology among individuals and groups, the long acclaimed logic and consistency of Boucher's commitment to loyalty seems a refuge. Even this small luxury is now denied us, however, for the recent biographers of Boucher have shown traditional interpretation to be as inaccurate as it was always neat. Boucher's Filmerism has proven to be a complex constitutional monarchism, while his firm support of Parliament and royal policy in

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the 1770's contradicted his early opposition to royal policies; moreover, his alleged social conservatism has been questioned because of his concern for the education of blacks and his toleration of Indian populations, which were far in advance of most Southern patriot leaders.[2]

Boucher, then, is not the perfect Loyalist, not the archetype against which we can conveniently measure the Loyalism of others. But if he cannot be made to stand for Loyalism in the old, simple manner, perhaps he has not lost his value to us. Boucher's history in America reminds us that the Revolution has a psychological dimension worth examining. In his struggle to assimilate and interpret the nature of the revolutionary conflict, and in his struggle to define his own role in that conflict, Boucher's experience illuminates vividly the personal crisis of men and women in revolutionary times.

Jonathan Boucher was born in Cumberland, England, in 1738.[3] Although his parents cherished memories of the grandeur and nobility of ancestors, their immediate reality was a steady decline into mean poverty. "I remember," Boucher later wrote from the safety of secure surroundings, "only that we lived in such a state of penury and hardship as I have never since seen equalled, no not even in parish almshouses."[4] Boucher's father was an amiable drunk and a charming ne'er-do-well, qualities his son recollected more with wonder than anger or disapproval. To his son, James Boucher was simply a man who lacked discipline and will, and whose charm seemed to preclude such ordinary virtues as self-restraint.

As a boy, Boucher lived the life of the hardworking, rural poor. Yet he wrote of himself that he was mischievous and "naturally lazy" and likely, as his neighbors predicted, to come to a bad end. Boucher's harsh judgment of himself rested on measurements of degree rather than kind. He knew that he was not always lazy or mischievous or self-indulgent, but for him consistency seemed the requisite for any virtue. Boucher lacked a sense of harmony or balance; in himself he saw only struggle and contradiction. In the rhythms of discipline and self-indulgence, work and play, he read a fatal inability on his part to establish a steady character.

Whether laziness or a reasonable discontent with manual labor spurred him, by age fifteen Boucher had determined to flee the farm. He could envision no alternatives to farm work save school-keeping, however, and by 1754 he was teaching thirty-two young boys during the day and instructing adults in the evening. Boucher's own education kept him only a few steps ahead of his pupils. Still, he was earning money by his wits rather than his hands.

In the next few years, as he struggled to improve his skills and his prospects, Boucher encountered two significant figures in his

life. Both were Anglican clergy, both teachers, and both had the steadiness of character that Boucher sought for himself. The first, a Reverend Ritson of Workington, tutored Boucher in mathematics. The second, Reverend John James, hired Boucher in 1756 to assist him at his small school, St. Bee's. Boucher worshipped the hard-working and methodical James, under whose wing the younger man felt himself developing a steady and rational existence. Yet in 1759, when Boucher learned of a teaching post in Virginia, he eagerly sought and won it. Willingly, Boucher laid aside the secure and ordered sanctuary of St. Bee's, attracted obviously by the extravagant salary of £ 60 a year and by the opportunity for advancement America seemed to offer. But there were other less tangible benefits. The Virginia post provided a chance to gratify once more that restless and undisciplined side of his character he could hold in check but never conquer. Unable to resolve the contradictions of his personality, Boucher relieved his tensions by shifting to extremes.

To Boucher's eyes, Virginia was a different world from Cumberland. It was a land of plenty and abundance, "most invitingly delightful," whose people lived well and enjoyed life "without any Labour." They were, he conceded, rather shallow people, inclined to levity rather than serious conversation, but their susceptibility to the easy life struck a chord in him.[5] Above all Virginia was an exotic place. Its air in deep summer was so thick it seemed to pervade people's very characters. The heat "fevers the Blood and sets all the animal Spirits in an Uprore," he told James. All restraints melted, and Virginians were rendered "Strangers to that Cool Steadiness w'c you in Engl'd justly value yourselves upon. . . ." No wonder that Boucher admonished James to "drop all Reserve" in his correspondence and be more critical. "Be so much my Friend as to be in appearance my Enemy," he urged, an ocean away from the safety of St. Bee's.[6]

Captain Dixon introduced Boucher into the social world of the "toddy drinkers." He quickly made friends among these local grandees. By February of 1760 Boucher no longer wrote of coping with his situation in Virginia. He now admitted to an enjoyment of it. The people had accepted him as one of them, if not wholly, at least enough to satisfy him for the time being. Yet here in an atmosphere in which self-restraint was not valued, Boucher began to discover a reservoir of natural sobriety and delicacy within himself. His new friends had dubbed him the "parson" because of what they judged his unaccountable "splenetic grave manner." In truth, Boucher told James, the colonists considered him dull.[7] There was surely an irony to be enjoyed in all this. Boucher, the English profligate; Boucher, the Virginia parson.

What could be made of Boucher's mixed reactions to his new surroundings? His vacillation between homesickness and excitement was, after all, only the behavior to be expected of a newcomer adjusting to a society unlike his own. Yet it was peculiar to Boucher that, from start to end, his comparison of the two societies rested on a projection of total opposition: England stood for order, sanity, personal restraint; America was the land of indulgence and animal madness.

"Parson" Boucher gave little thought to a career in the Church that first year in Virginia. His energies were focused entirely on the world of trade, but his maiden project to sponsor a shipment of goods met with disaster. The philandering Captain Dixon demanded an ungentlemanly *quid pro quo* for a loan, and Boucher's only link to the commercial world suddenly went bankrupt. Within a few short weeks his promising career was aborted.

Boucher was disillusioned by these events. It was all too clear that passions were not controlled in this country, nor were consequences faced squarely by men. Prosperous enterprises crumbled without warning. He was still as determined to rise quickly in the world—but now he wondered, how? He was twenty-two and the truth was that he had no respectable or promising profession. Then in 1761, one of his new friends, Reverend Giberne, offered to recommend Boucher for the vacant post of Rector of Hanover Parish in Virginia. The offer, Boucher knew, could not be dismissed out of hand. Though the clergy were not accorded great prestige they were given land, and there was a certain security in joining the church's ranks. Mercantile firms came and went, but the Church of England endured. Boucher decided to accept the offer, though it meant a return to England for ordination. It was an expensive trip for a man whose assets were potential rather than real. When he sailed for England in the winter of 1761, after two years in the land of opportunities, Boucher had succeeded only in tripling his debts.

Following ordination, Boucher returned to America accepting a position at Hanover Parish. His parishioners liked him, and his school attracted several young men of good family. His wealth increased as he acquired slaves, cattle, and horses. Yet Boucher was miserable and restless. When St. Mary's in Caroline County, Virginia, became vacant, Boucher eagerly took this new parish.

His tenure at St. Mary's was long and successful, but Boucher leaves a record of unhappiness. He threw himself into his work, furiously writing sermons, expanding his necessary but always repugnant duties as schoolmaster, managing his plantation and household. His early years here were, like those at St. Bee's, years of "industry and exertion [that] were extraordinary."[8] Yet no peace

of mind came from this industrious life. His parishoners cared no more for intellectually challenging sermons than his sociable companions for serious conversation. Although he filled his days with work, his self-discipline faltered at night, and evenings were spent in hard-drinking.

Boucher was perhaps most disturbed by his inability to embrace the theological foundations of his own calling. Looking for answers to his own questions, he began to devour the works of modern, popular critics of the Church. These writers challenged ritual and credo, exposing internal contradictions or inherent illogic in the traditional tenets of faith. Boucher's mind swirled. Such bold attacks seemed to him affirmations of modernity, testimony to intellectual intensity, and, even more appealingly, assertions of personal independence of thought. This spirit of independence struck a chord in him, and the rebellious posture fitted an image he held of himself. It pleased Boucher to think that lack of internal discipline could be a virtue in the pursuit of knowledge, and that receptivity to ideas seemed to be the reward of the disorderly mind.

As Boucher's doubts about his Church's theology gave way to conscious rebellion, his church services grew increasingly unorthodox. He thanked his American circumstances for the freedom to act with such independence. Not surprisingly Boucher's independent spirit was reflected in his politics as well. England's new colonial policies evoked thoroughly Whiggish sentiments from him. He hotly denounced the Stamp Act as "oppressive, impolitic, and illegal."[9] Boucher's political views did not, of course, spring directly from midnight struggles with theological demons. The grandees whose attention he craved and whose sons he tutored were good Whigs themselves. If Boucher would belong socially he must naturally be correct in his politics.

Toward the end of the 1760's Boucher began to retreat from his rebellion. When he spoke of it later, the entire episode of doubt and denial was described as no more than a formal, internal debate, surely not a crisis, and he claimed that he had never been so caught up as to fail to be a judicious student of the issues. He had set about to read both sides and to continue to be an "orthodox believer" until he resolved his own position. Resolution came, he recorded, through a return to the Scriptures, and to their injunction to put faith above efforts to understand. Thus five years of questioning and challenge were reduced to a moment of doubt.[10] By the end of the decade Boucher had chosen a new role for himself. He now embraced the authority he had once resisted. He had reached a watershed, for at thirty Boucher began to set his philosophical and psychological houses in strictest order.

The acceptance of orthodoxy marked the beginning of a personal

maturity for Boucher. In resolving his religious crisis, he had chosen to follow the steady path without the aid of a respected authority like John James. His whole focus now shifted: he discovered that the source of strength for men and women lay not in the magical influence of special individuals but in the structure of major social institutions and in their traditions.

Change did not come at once in all areas of Boucher's life. In politics he remained a supporter of colonial protest and challenge well into 1770. In personal behavior, he retained his blend of impetuosity and compulsive self-control. But Boucher's devotion to the institutional framework, which sustained order and offered an individual a meaningful and secure place within it, was now established. In the next three years, as patrons and bureaucrats in Maryland frequently made promises of appointment which could not be kept, Boucher's respect for persons in authority diminished. But his concern for the dignity of their offices did not. As a result, he began to see that once attractive openness of American society in a less favorable light. He perceived that the colonial branches of church and state were dangerously weak and felt that without these institutions people would be forced to depend only upon their individual steadiness of character to sustain their society and themselves.

Boucher sought to strengthen both secular and religious institutions, for he was convinced of the intricate interdependence of these two spheres. He saw an order in things established in scriptural and constitutional laws, and sustained by a hierarchical structure that reached from the smallest social unit, the patriarchal family, to the largest units of church and nation. The family was any society's base, and in it religious and political authority were united in one figure: the father. In the larger, more complex society of many families, the unity appeared to dissolve, and state and church institutions specialized in the regulation of social and spiritual man and woman. But the separation was functional, not organic. The two were merely branches of the whole. For Boucher, compelling proof of this unity lay in the fact that identical human responses were necessary to sustain or destroy either hierarchy. Obedience, faith, respect, submission, all the virtues which needed nurturing, secured both church and state, while pride, the restless spirit of innovation, human fickleness, all the flaws of the human character, threatened them equally. A blow to one must be felt by the other. His American sermons repeat this theme of interdependence, and embellish it: schism, irreligion, and deism find their counterparts in factionalism, republicanism, and radicalism. "A levelling republican spirit in the Church," Boucher warned, "naturally leads to republicanism in the state."[11]

In such a vision of the organic wholeness of the spiritual and social

realms, there was nothing particularly original or unusual for an Anglican clergyman. Nor did it represent the reactionary hysteria by which Boucher was later labeled. It was simply an attempt of a maturing man to shape a coherent view of the larger world in which he lived.

In all likelihood, Boucher's intellectual maturation would not have taken root had not his material circumstances undergone change as well. In 1769 his long awaited appointment came—and it was a plum. Boucher was to become rector of St. Anne's in Annapolis, the "genteelist town in America," inhabited by men "highly respectable, as to station, fortune, and education." Two years later, appointed to Queen Anne's Parish in Prince George County, Jonathan Boucher had, at last, attained success.[12] His wealth, on paper, steadily increased. His preferment was worth £250; his marriage to Eleanor Addison in 1772 brought property worth £2,500; he was a plantation owner, a master of slaves, a speculator in land. By November of 1773, Boucher reckoned himself worth £3,000. If, somehow, he never seemed to have money in his purse, it was negligence and an incurable urge to take risks that caused him to be empty-handed.[13] Still Boucher had enough to begin to re-acquire his family's land in England, to support his ne'er-do-well brother-in-law's family, and to pay penance for an indiscretion by supporting and educating two young girls. His social position was fully secured, not so much by reason of his profession or property, but by his marriage to Nelly Addison. The union brought more than wealth and happiness. It joined him to that network of the Dulanys and Addisons, the most powerful elements in Maryland society.

Boucher was not a little proud of his success. He had fulfilled the colonial world's promise of opportunity. Moreover, his political position in relation to patronage was far more desirable than it had been in Virginia. He would never again be a beggar of favors in America, for he had acquired influence with the new young governor of Maryland, Sir Robert Eden. But the sweetness of success came also from the recognition and the affirmation that Boucher was a mature and responsible man. He believed his material gains manifested this image. During the years of waiting in Virginia the desire to be so acknowledged had grown sharp. He had resolved that his public reception must be made to match his private confidence; the outer trappings must correspond to the inner growth. And in this new colony—despite the tempest that immediately surrounded him—an equilibrium of public and private image was achieved.

"I flatter myself," Boucher remarked in 1771, that "I may quietly repose myself for the Remainder of my Life, under my own vine, Bless'd with that Ease, Competence, and Independence, which I have so long been in search of." But such a placid life was never his.

The tumult of the 1770's—the debate over the episcopacy, the acrimonious battle in Maryland between administration and assembly over the form of subsidy to the Church, and the gradual but steady recasting of all political issues in the 1770's as conflicts of local and imperial interests—was the reality of Boucher's world. Yet the struggles between imperial authority and local will seemed to bring about a personal crisis in Boucher's life. His involvement in this struggle was a logical, though not inevitable, outgrowth of his own decision to actively serve the institutions he had recently affirmed.[14]

In this congruence of the external and internal, Boucher is perhaps unusual among loyalists, for in an ideological sense, the 1770's caught many of them unaware and without a coherent analysis of their society or their own circumstances. Indeed, many were struck a sudden blow, forcing inchoate, unarticulated notions of the value and appropriateness of the structures they supported into hasty order.

Boucher had earlier dealt with these very questions of social order and organization. If his most extensive written discourses on the "American problem" were composed after he left America in 1775, still his analysis was not retrospective: Jonathan Boucher knew what was wrong with American society when he arrived in Maryland. The current crisis, he thought, was rooted in the fact that Crown and colonists, in their rush to establish an American empire, had allowed threats to social order to grow unchecked. Now the colonial society was falling victim to its own excesses which, tragically, had taken root even within the colonial government and church. Individual opportunity, social mobility, the presence of vast natural resources, as well as the benign policy of the Mother Country contributed to the instability of a society without the solid foundations needed to sustain it. And now a state without a tradition of executive vigor, an established church less secure than local dissenting sects, and a ruling class without the legitimation of time or continuity were being asked to restrain republicanism and dissent. Moreover, the governing classes had succumbed to the appeal of individualism, and demeaned civil government by their own example as factious politicans. Their authority diminished and the people ruled them, so that the natural political leaders were required to learn to speak and act so as to please their inferiors. Other dependent leaders—more evil in Boucher's eyes—consciously exploited their symbiotic relationship with the people. These rulers gained ascendancy by posing as the people's champions, but they manipulated the "humble lot." Their goal, Boucher was certain, was the total destruction of legitimate government, even though their banners read "information of abuses."

The Church in America, now no more than a shadow of its former self, could not be expected to restrain these "restless men." The crumbling church buildings were themselves testimony to the institution's decline. The ministry too, Boucher admitted, "was as shabby as you could bear to look at. . . ."[16]

For five stormy years Boucher struggled to improve Maryland's institutions. In these battles his social vision and his self-interest smoothly overlapped; and while his fate was directly linked to that of his Church, it was not from such narrow personal considerations that Boucher felt he acted. It was his commitment to a vision of the good society that propelled him into an active role in the religious conflicts in the 1770's. During this period, Boucher unsuccessfully sought to shore up the Church through the implementation of two reforms. He attempted to convince Marylanders of the wisdom of an Anglican bishop for America, but the suspicion of political influence remained strong among the colonists, and the plan was defeated. He also sought to prevent the commutation of church subsidies from tobacco to cash. At stake here was a considerable decrease in income for men like himself. Boucher confessed his concern over his personal stake, but he claimed to be equally troubled by the consequences of this impoverishment of the clergy. By degrading the man, the office inevitably was degraded as well. Nevertheless, a "few meddling, half-learned, popular lawyers of Maryland," led by men like Samuel Chase and William Paca, carried the assembly battle and pressured Governor Eden into signing the bill.[17]

Boucher's vigorous campaigning on both religious issues coupled with his conspicuous role as Eden's adviser, earned him permanent and powerful enemies. "All the forward and noisy patriots," Boucher noted, now viewed him as obnoxious. By 1773 he felt himself the object of continual harassment. Even in his own parish Boucher was kept in a "constant fever," for here there was no bond of affection between churchgoer and spiritual leader, and the radicals were numerous and well organized. Nor were these people shy in expressing themselves. It was a struggle for him to wrest even the most sullen truce from these "singularly violent, purse-proud, and factious people."[18]

Throughout the early seventies, Boucher's situation grew steadily worse. "I daily met with insults, indignities, and injuries," he later recalled. The campaign against him developed an increasingly ominous tone as the popular party formed extralegal organizations that began to overshadow legitimate government, and various enforcement committees took up Boucher's case. Although he continued to suffuse his writings and his sermons with an air of

authority and advisement, he was now clearly on the defensive. The opposition, with its congresses, its provisional governments, and its "banditti" committees, had gained the upper hand. Boucher was not prescient and did not predict the Revolution's date or its outcome, but by the summer of 1774, he had surely begun to contemplate his defeat. The institutions of order were weaker now than they had ever been. By the mid-1770's Boucher believed the church in Maryland had "received its death's blow." Legitimate government, too, had been brought to its knees. Republican lawyers who, to Boucher's consternation, seemed to spring up spontaneously, controlled the press and the assemblies of Maryland and Virginia—and all of New England life. The always weak American institutions were now beyond self-revitalization; only a drastic razing and rebuilding would do. Nothing would be set right "without a total Revolution in American Politics." Thus while the American opposition still hesitated to name their goal, Boucher and other loyalists throughout the colonies began to call openly for revolution. Boucher recognized that such a revolution—or "new-modelling"—was entirely beyond his powers to initiate or execute. The fate of America must finally be decided in England. In this new phase of the struggle, loyal Americans could play no more than marginal roles. Boucher resigned himself to the role of critic of radical arguments and activities.[19]

Boucher's emotional confrontation with the Coercive Acts crisis of 1774 was less easily resolved. He did not blame himself for the clear, though hopefully temporary, defeat of established Church and legal State, but the acknowledgement that social order was failing must have provoked anxiety within him. The maintenance of his own inner equilibrium had depended heavily upon the institutions now in disarray before him. He resisted the impulse to flee, to deny the change in the balance of powers around him. He did go so far that summer as to retreat to the Lodge, a Potomac plantation far from the tensions of life in Queen Anne's Parish. But Boucher's energies were directed to assimilating reality, not denying it. The problem was how to define himself in, and to, a world rapidly turning upside down. He knew that the institutions that had sustained him were, for the moment, dependent upon him. Their principles could now survive only through individuals. Boucher's role was to embody that system of values now cut adrift of its institutional moorings. His importance to his cause rested in the style in which he confronted his enemies. By demanding personal respect, he would insure his cause some of the respect it was due. The result was a year of confrontation and defiance. Without any sense of irony, Jonathan Boucher slipped once again into the role of rebel.

Much of Boucher's fame or notoriety rests upon this performance,

short but brilliant, as a rebel against rebels. Certainly his enemies gave him ample opportunity to play the part in 1774 and 1775. The radicals demanded pledges of loyalty to their cause; repeatedly, and firmly, Boucher resisted. His absolute refusal to sign an oath of loyalty to the popular cause angered Marylanders, and it was not long before informations were signed against him, naming him an enemy to America. When an armed escort arrived in 1774 to take Boucher before a local Committee, both radicals and their suspects seemed ready for their confrontation. In the face of his enemies, Boucher was the image of self-confidence and haughty disdain. He denied their authority and dismissed their power to arrest. He went to speak with their Committee, he said, as one gentleman to other gentlemen assembled. After charges were read against him, Boucher rose to respond; but he did not address himself to the authorities before him. Rather, he pleaded his case with the crowd gathered to observe the formalities. Boucher, the impassioned spokesman against arbitrary authority, argued his right to resist republicanism by appealing to rank and file republicans. In defense of legitimate law and order, he could enjoy the new power of the demagogue and the old role of the stubborn resister.[20]

In this dangerous game of reversing the tables, Boucher was not always successful; but in this instance the audience voted his acquittal, and Boucher returned home unmolested. Not long after, in Alexandria, Virginia, he persuaded a hostile mob that they were being used by his accuser to settle a purely personal grudge, not a political issue. Confrontations like this may have delighted the determined and dedicated Boucher, but the Alexandria incident deeply frightened his wife Nelly. Afterward, she wrung from her husband a promise not to leave his Potomac retreat without good reason. In March 1775, Boucher surrendered his post in Queen Anne's Parish and took up duties in Henry Addison's church near his home. Still, if Boucher was not available for confrontation in the streets, he continued to speak his mind in the pulpit. Challenging the mood of his congregants, Boucher preached the importance of "peaceableness." Immediately, angry parishioners stood and left the church. Threats only hardened Boucher's resolve, and thereafter the minister who urged peaceableness and passive resistance preached with loaded pistols beside his sermon notes.[21]

When the provisional government declared May 11 a day of fasting, Boucher set himself on a collision course with his enemies. He thought his duty clear: "God was a God of order," not revolution. He would preach that day at Queen Anne's, and speak out against the use of the pulpit for such obviously inappropriate political ends.

Boucher was greeted at his own Church by 200 armed men, deter-

mined to prevent him preaching. Despite their threats, Boucher moved toward the pulpit. A friend prevented him from reaching it, certain that ascending the pulpit would mean Boucher's death. The mob encircled the two men and, for once, Boucher's enemies' victory appeared complete. But, suddenly, and in characteristic fashion, Boucher outmaneuvered them. He grabbed their leader by his collar, aimed a loaded pistol at the startled man's head, and loudly threatened to blow his brains out unless a path to the church door was cleared.[22]

It was Boucher's last act of public defiance. Friends urged him to leave the colony immediately. Enemies were equally persuasive. It was only a matter of time before the radicals proscribed him for refusing to take an oath of loyalty to their rebel government. All summer Boucher wrestled with the pros and cons of self-imposed exile. The fate of his investments and his property was uncertain, even if, as he assured Nelly, "the Storm would blow over" in six months. The best plan would be to leave Nelly Boucher at the Lodge on the Potomac, there to take care of her own fragile health and of Boucher's material wealth as best she could. In September, however, the radicals—and his wife—took matters out of his hands. Early that month the Committee of Safety resolved to confront Boucher. He knew it was imperative that he flee, but with the moment of separation actually upon her, Nelly Boucher refused to stay behind. She was coming with her husband to England. Boucher managed to make good their escape, and on Saturday, September 9th, he packed the few belongings they were to take; the following day he and his wife boarded a small schooner that would take them to the awaiting frigate *Choptank*. Monday, the Committee of Safety arrived at the Lodge to find the Reverend Jonathan Boucher was not at home.

Boucher never returned "home." Perhaps he never expected to. He spoke of a six-month absence from America, but added that a little self-delusion on such occasions is not to be discouraged. "I wished to believe we should return. . . ."[23]

There are few more vivid examples of the complexity of human response to the Revolutionary crisis than the life of Jonathan Boucher in America. No one was a more formidable opponent of the colonial rebellion than he; no loyalist presented a more coherent and comprehensive critique of the Lockean principles upon which that rebellion was based. And although many loyalists interpreted the Revolution as a battle of anarchy against order, Boucher most eloquently developed this theme. Yet his own life is testimony to the fact that rebellion can be a psychic posture as well as a political one. Despite his conservative—some have argued, reactionary—ideology, Boucher, in the crisis of 1774, responded to events and circumstances

by adopting a role both familiar and attractive to him: the rebel. Boucher did not and could not create a Revolution so that he might play the rebellious role again with impunity from his own conscience. To the contrary, all that we can discover about him indicates that, after his own personal crisis in the late 1760's, he never again sought that role. The historical truth is that 1774 thrust the part upon him, as it did potentially upon loyalists everywhere. Men and women—staunch supporters of a conservative status quo—faced a radically altered reality in which they might find themselves rebelling against rebels, defying authorities they did not acknowledge in the name of authority overturned, resisting the pull of a new social order in the interests of preserving an old one. For some the role was impossible to sustain, for it contradicted their nature just as the rebellion ran contrary to their political convictions. In these men and women, personality and ideology were at one. But Boucher's response makes us acknowledge that such perfect congruence was not always the case. Some of his strongest personal impulses and his deepest intellecutal commitments came into harmony when he emerged a rebel in the name of orthodoxy.

The fascination, and perhaps much of the importance of the Revolutionary era remains, in part, the fact that it was an extraordinary moment in history, a crisis period which forced into the sharpest focus conflicts and contradictions within individuals that in calmer times seemed negligible. If the larger social crisis is ultimately only an aggregate of these individual crises, the very particular lives of people like Jonathan Boucher gain importance to historians. With exquisite irony, the Revolution fulfilled Boucher. But in many men and women it seems likely that the same Revolution forced a less bearable juxtaposition of personality and ideology. One thing seems certain: the American Revolution prompted in many an internal war, a war, if we will, of intellect and emotion.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Jonathan Boucher, ed., *Reminiscences of an American Loyalist, 1738-1789* (Boston and New York, 1927), 80. Among the many works in which Boucher is discussed, see Vernon Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought: 1620-1800, the Colonial Mind* (New York, 1927); Claude Van Tyne, *The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (New York, 1902); Max Savelle, *Seeds of Liberty: The Genesis of the American Mind* (New York, 1948); Richard Gummere, "Jonathan Boucher, Toryissmus," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, LV (1960), 138-145; Moses Coit Tyler, *Literary History of the American Revolution*, 1736-1783 (New York, 1897); William Nelson, *The American Tory* (Boston, 1964); James E. Pate, "Jonathan Boucher, An American Loyalist," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, XXV (1930), 305-319.

[2] Anne Y. Zimmer, "Jonathan Boucher: Moderate Loyalist and Public Man"

(unpublished doctoral dissertation, Wayne State University, 1966). See also Anne Y. Zimmer and Alfred H. Kelly, "Jonathan Boucher: Constitutional Conservative," *Journal of American History*, XVIII (March, 1972), 897-922; Michael Clark, "Jonathan Boucher: The Mirror of Reaction," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, XXXIII (November, 1969), 19-32.

[3] The most complete account of Jonathan Boucher's life (although not always the most accurate) is his own autobiography, *Reminiscences*. The narrative of this essay draws largely from this autobiography, and from the Jonathan Boucher Papers, East Pelham Record Office, Lewes, England, partially reprinted in the *Maryland Historical Magazine*.

[4] Boucher, *Reminiscences*, 9.

[5] Boucher to John James, August 7, 1759, *Md. Hist. Mag.*, VII (1912), 2-8.

[6] Boucher to James, September 14, 1759, August 7, 1759, *ibid.*, VII, 8-11, 2-8.

[7] Boucher to James, February, 1760, *ibid.*, VII, 21-26.

[8] Boucher, *Reminiscences*, 41.

[9] Boucher to James, December 9, 1765, November 28, 1767, *Md. Hist. Mag.*, VII, 294-300, 351-356.

[10] Boucher, *Reminiscences*, 43, 45.

[11] Jonathan Boucher, *A View of the Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution; in Thirteen Discourses, Preached in North America between the Years 1763 and 1775: With an Historical Preface* (London, 1797), 104; for emphasis on this theme, see Discourse II, IV, VII, and VIII of the volume.

[12] Boucher to James, November 26, 1768, July 25, 1769, *Md. Hist. Mag.*, VII, 34-43; Boucher, *Reminiscences*, 65.

[13] Boucher, *Reminiscences*, 65.

[14] Boucher to James, April 4, 1771, *Md. Hist. Mag.*, VIII, 176-178. For good discussions of Maryland before the Revolution, see Zimmer, "Jonathan Boucher", unpublished dissertation, and Charles Albro Barker, *The Background of the Revolution in Maryland* (New Haven, 1940).

[15] Boucher, *Reminiscences*, 103; Boucher, *A View*, 310, 393.

[16] Boucher to James, August 25, 1770, *Md. Hist. Mag.*, VIII, 171-176.

[17] See Zimmer, "Jonathan Boucher, Unpublished dissertation; Boucher, *A View*, 222, 234.

[18] Boucher, *Reminiscences*, 74, 93, 96.

[19] Boucher, *Reminiscences*, 105, 128-136; Boucher to William Smith, May 4, 1775, *Md. Hist. Mag.*, VIII, 237-240; Jonathan Boucher, *A Letter from a Virginian to the Members of the Congress to be Held at Philadelphia on the first of September, 1774* (Boston, 1774).

[20] Boucher, *A View*, 204, 212; Boucher, *Reminiscences*, 106-108; Boucher to Smith, May 4, 1775, *Md. Hist. Mag.*, VIII, 237-240.

[21] Boucher, *Reminiscences*, 110-112, 113.

[22] *Ibid.*, 121-122.

[23] *Ibid.*, 127.

THE LABOR FRONT DURING THE REVOLUTION

By
Elizabeth Cometti

"The greedy Merchant begins first to devour, and then the once called honest Farmer, plays on the string of avarice, calling it self defence: and we who work for wages, are cut between the wheted wheel," complained a workingman during the Revolution.[1] Yet his position was not without advantages. Work was plentiful and wages were good, perhaps even better than they had been in the past. At the same time, however, the cost of living rose sharply, thus reducing the real wage.[2]

Following the adoption of the Continental Association in 1774, it was generally expected that non-importation would continue for several years, war or no war. This led the advocates of American industrialism to utilize the political crisis for their ends. The managers of the United Company of Philadelphia contended that Pennsylvanians could save £250,000 sterling annually by manufacturing their own cloth. Besides advancing the cause of liberty, the enterprise would provide employment for many poor people and encourage immigration of foreign artisans. The promoters denied that increased labor demands would draw workers from agriculture; industry, they said, could tap two fresh sources of manpower—women and children. Shortly after its organization, the United Company employed four hundred people and sought additional capital in order to advance "private interest, charity to the poor, and the public good." Some merchants imported experienced women spinners in lieu of the proscribed British commodities. Most of the several thousand women engaged in textile manufacturing in the Philadelphia area did the work in their homes under the putting-out system.[3]

To further offset the effects of non-importation and to prepare for war, the revolutionary governments passed numerous resolutions for encouraging the production of wool, flax, cotton, hemp, madder, cloth paper, chemicals, buttons, glass, salt, nails, stockings, tinplate, powder, fire-arms, malt liquors, wool combs, and other goods of current or anticipated scarcity. These resolutions in turn inspired local bodies to offer rewards for the production of essential articles. A Philadelphia establishment even announced a prize of £15 for sixty thousand or more cocoons raised in Pennsylvania at one crop within a single family.[4]

With the outbreak of hostilities emphasis shifted from civilian

to military production. Producers of war materials were offered financial inducements such as interest-free loans from public funds and guarantees of profits. The Connecticut Assembly promised monetary premiums for every stand of arms manufactured before October, 1775, and for gun locks, saltpeter, and sulphur. A later act offered a bounty of £30 for the first five hundred pounds of gunpowder produced in the colony and £10 for every hundred pounds of saltpeter on condition that the manufacturer agree to reveal the materials and process used for making the latter. Newspapers carried directions for producing saltpeter and the New York Committee of Safety printed three thousand leaflets containing "the most plain and easy experiments" for its manufacture. These generous incentives for military production led some manufacturers of consumer goods to seek similar assistance on the ground that their undertaking would provide work for "the industrious poor."[5]

Whetted by rosy prospects of guaranteed profits, bounties, premiums, prizes, and other inducements, the provincials enthusiastically went to work manufacturing fire-arms and saltpeter, casting mortars and shells, erecting rolling and slitting mills, and scrabbling for basic materials. Faulty methods were immediately discarded for better ones. Confidence was high.[6]

Provision of an adequate supply of laborers—both skilled and unskilled—was, nevertheless, a persistent problem. The abnormal demand for skilled labor created by industrial expansion was partially met by the importation of foreign artisans and the increased use of apprentices. Still the manpower shortage became so acute in Virginia that a Williamsburg textile firm feared that visitors to the factory might induce the people employed there to leave. Apprentices were engaged to work at the public gun factory in Fredericksburg, and the local gentry, including ladies, even lent a hand in making bullets.[7] Moreover, children and blacks, thought to be more dependable sources of labor than older male apprentices, many of whom entered the armed forces either from patriotic motives or from a desire to obtain the bounties offered for long-term enlistments, were frequently trained to be skilled artisans.[8] While Congress asked the workers, among them apprentices, not to desert their present essential occupation for the military service, the Continental Congress and some of the states did not oppose the enlistment of apprentices, provided the masters gave their consent or received compensation.[9]

The demand for workers was so great that anyone could find employment regardless of experience or nationality. A Philadelphia advertisement in 1778, written in French, English, and German, offered employment to all except deserters from the American

Army or the French Navy. Applicants were promised good wages, lodgings, fuel, candles, washing, and enough clothing to "repel the Rigours of Winter." Victuals were to consist of a "crust of good bread" or a biscuit and a glass of the "best" rum before work; fruit, potatoes and broiled meat for breakfast; soup and boiled meat for dinner; soup and roasted meat for supper, with beer and cider from time to time.[10]

The use of enemy deserters and prisoners helped to ease the labor shortage in some areas. Many Hessians were employed in Pennsylvania during the summer of 1777 at the official rate of one shilling a day, considerably less than the wages commanded by free labor. The Germans worked in the fields, at the forge and loom, and at other essential tasks. Hessian prisoners among the Convention troops stationed in Virginia were sought as artisans, but their officers discouraged their "deserting" to accept employment by threatening to withhold their clothing, wages, and money due them for special services. In spite of the greater availability of Hessians, some employers preferred to hire British prisoners because of their knowledge of the English language and their superior industrial skill.[11]

The hiring out of prisoners, however, was not without its critics and its dangers. The army, for instance, complained that lack of vigilance enabled hired prisoners to escape after the soldiers had risked their lives in capturing them. Prisoners were also suspected of conveying "prejudiced Stories in favour of their Country" to the "ignornant" people with whom they mixed.[12]

The southern states felt compelled to draft slave labor for defense and other public work. Compensation went to the owners, who received for each black drafted ten shillings a day in South Carolina and three shillings in Georgia. Virginia masters were quite reluctant to hire out their slaves, and when they did it was at such exorbitant rates that the Virginia Board of War eventually proposed that the state purchase blacks at auctions of loyalist property. The Virginia Committee of Safety sent some of the hapless slaves involved in an aborted wartime insurrection to work in the lead mines in Fincastle County.[13]

The capture of slaves by the British and desertions among bondservants created a dearth of domestic help, particularly in combat areas. During the Yorktown campaign many wealthy Virginians, accustomed to the labor of numerous servants, experienced a rude change in their normally comfortable existence. In one household the master lost all his serving men. In another a child was deserted by its nurse. A helpless mistress left without a cook was "obliged to have recourse to her neighbours to dress her dinner for her."

Farther north servants were equally scarce. "Maids have become Mistresses," complained an outraged Philadelphia matron after her new servant had entertained a visitor all day and . . . invited him to lodge with her, without asking leave." The presence of many lonely soldiers in Philadelphia during the British occupation enabled young women of indifferent scruples to pay off their indentures in surprisingly short time.[14]

Various expedients were sought to mitigate the labor problems. The revolutionary governments often granted exemptions from military duty to many workers in essential production and services. These exemptions might be limited to such time as was required to complete a certain task, such as providing wood for the shivering forces in Massachusetts or grinding flour urgently needed for the famished army at Valley Forge. Or a producer of scarce commodities, like salt and military equipment, might obtain exemption for a specified number of workmen. In general, iron workers, blacksmiths, armorers, saddlers, teamsters, wood-cutters, charcoal burners, carpenters, wheelwrights, leather workers, and those engaged in manufacturing clothing were exempt from service for as long as they continued in these categories of work.[15] Keepers of beacons did not have to serve in New Jersey. When the firemen of New York protested to the Provincial Congress that they could not "tend" to the "fire-engines" and serve as minute men at the same time, they were relieved of the latter service.[16]

Still, the need for workers became more pressing as the war continued. As early as 1776 the supply of shoemakers was insufficent, but that of iron workers, being supplemented by new additions from less remunerative occupations, was at the moment adequate. By 1779, though, the labor scarcity had become general and contractors were sharing with army recruiters the frustrations resulting from insufficient manpower. Employers were also complaining that workers were not as dependable and industrious as they once were. A New England minister wrote that for want of labor his apples were rotting and wasting, and flaxseed lay unwinnowed on the barn floor.[17]

Labor costs escalated as the war persisted. Wages were higher in the vicinity of the armies than in the more peaceful areas. One congressman thought labor costs were as much as "150 percent" greater in New York and Philadelphia than in North Carolina. Indeed, he suggested, the labor of blacks could not be bought at any price, while most good craftsmen were either in the army or were working for Congress at excessively high wages.[18]

The labor laws that prevailed in the colonies were generally modeled after those in England. The English statute of 1562-63, which fixed the term of apprenticeship at seven years, was adopted

in the colonies with slight modifications. As in England, idleness was discouraged by laws providing for penalties for vagrants and idlers; and poor children were required to be taught a trade and forced to work.[19] In accordance with the mercantilist convictions of the seventeenth century, the young colonial governments, particularly those of New England, attempted to regulate wages and prices. By the next century, however, such legislation was on the decline, but did not entirely disappear. Regulation of public or quasi-public services continued to the Revolution, and so did the corvee.[20]

The Continental Congress, whose policy of currency inflation was the major factor in price appreciation, encouraged regulation on the part of the states. In late 1776, committees from the New England states convened at Providence to prepare schedules for prices and wages. These, with some variations, were adopted by the four governments. Following a spirited debate in Congress on the Providence recommendations, that body advised the other states to consider taking similar measures and to call regional meetings for that purpose. Only the York Convention, representing the Mid-Atlantic states, materialized, and its results were negative. Undaunted by this lack of success, the New England states and New York met in Springfield in 1777 to deal with the twin problems of currency depreciation and price controls. Again, nothing effectual was accomplished. Convinced that if such regulation was to be successful it had to be general, Congress called for three regional conventions to meet at Charleston, South Carolina, Fredericksburg, and New Haven. Only the last meeting took place and its recommendations were meagerly implemented and short-lived. Regulation was next attempted on the local and intra-state level, but again the results were disappointing. Still, the spokesmen for regulation persevered. On October 20, 1779, commissioners from the New England states met at Hartford to take into consideration the rapid depreciation of the currency and the rise in the cost of living. Whistling the same old tune, they attributed the previous failures of regulation to its "partial extent" and proposed that all the states as far southward as Virginia meet in convention at Philadelphia in 1780. Although this meeting took place its results followed the earlier pattern. Obviously, the self-proclaimed sovereign states were not yet ready for common action on economic matters; laissez faire was fast gaining the upper hand.[21]

Although the attempts at regulation dealt with both wages and prices, the former lagged behind the rapidly increasing costs of commodities. In 1778, for instance, the New Haven Convention fixed wages at 75 per cent above what they had been in 1774. The same rate of increase was allowed for all unspecified articles of Ameri-

can manufacture and production except salt, fuel, meat, poultry, vegetables, fibers, and sundry imported commodities. These loopholes, of course, depressed real wages.[22]

Wages also reflected the depreciation of the continental currency, which circulated at approximately two to one of specie early in 1777, four to one in January 1778, eight to one in January 1779, around forty-five to one in January 1780, and one hundred to one in January 1781. Therefore, if a laborer's wage in terms of continental currency doubled between 1778 and 1779, the increase was only nominal. Frequently, however, wage adjustments provided for fringe payments in scarce commodities, such as sugar, rum and salt, or, in some key occupations, in specie. To simplify and adjust transactions, farmers and tradesmen in rural areas found it convenient to exchange services and goods at pre-war rates, usually those prevailing in 1774. Workers also increased their total earnings by engaging in more than one occupation.[23]

Various factors influenced the wage scale. Carpenters under army contract in the New York Department in 1775-1776, received wages ranging from 10 shillings a day for foremen to 4 shillings for apprentices. Laborers received 6 shillings a day regardless of race or sex. The work day was from sunrise to sunset, with one hour off for breakfast and one and a half hours for dinner. Rations consisted of slightly more than a pound of meat and flour, as well as one-half pint of rum per day; in addition, workers received four pints of peas and one pint of molasses per week and an allowance of one day's wage for every twenty miles of travel from home. "Finding oneself"—that is, providing one's own tools—was an important consideration in determining wages. A Rhode Island act of 1777 allowed ship carpenters 7 shillings a day if they found themselves, and 5 shillings if they did not. Wages of blacksmiths differed as much as 25 per cent depending on whether or not they supplied their iron and tools.[24]

Wages also varied according to season and place. Farm labor was almost twice as lucrative in summer as in winter. Some regulatory committees sanctioned disparities; for instance, Rhode Island committees limited the charge of Providence tailors to £17 for making a suit, Greenwich tailors to £16, and those in other parts of the state to £15.[25]

As might be expected, legal wages were not always enforced. A Philadelphia employer complained in the summer of 1777 that his spinners and weavers were receiving double their former wages, although an act passed during the subsequent winter limited all wages to 50 per cent more than what they were in 1774.[26]

The southern states held themselves aloof from these spasmodic efforts to regulate commodities and services. Not that costs were

static below the Mason-Dixon Line. In Maryland wages nominally increased 2500 per cent between August 1777 and the end of 1780. Laborers in Virginia received from 2 to 5 shillings a day in 1775, 90 shillings a day in 1779, and up to £18 in 1780. The reappearance of gold and silver for settling wages reduced them to from 3 to 6 shillings a day. The hire of blacks also advanced enormously during the crisis, as did the nominal pay of state employees.[27]

Few Americans could look at regulation objectively. It was either an insidious evil or a wonder-working panacea, depending, generally, on how controls affected the individual purse. Less enthusiastic supporters of economic intervention likened the policy "to an outward application in a fever... [of] a temporary expedient that [might] give some check to the disorder, till the more slowly-operating internal applications can have their proper effect."[28]

Labor was quick to justify its demands and to oppose any attempts to limit its wages, although the artisans were not of one mind. When angry Philadelphians attempted to reduce prices of articles manufactured by tanners, curriers, and cordwainers in the summer of 1779, James Roney, chairman of a group of these tradesmen, contended that the proposed regulation would place their earnings far behind the cost of other commodities. Since prices for their goods were fixed according to those current at the time of delivery and not at the time of payment, these tradesmen often suffered heavy losses because of the rapidly declining value of the currency. Could they stay in business and pay their journeymen a living wage, he asked, when their commodities were more severely limited than those of other tradesmen. Not "until a general regulation of all other articles [should] take place, by common consent," the protesting craftsmen warned, would they consider themselves bound by the new price ceilings. But leather workers of Philadelphia accused Roney's faction of seeking to obstruct and defeat the good intentions of the regulating committee, and still another group of cordwainers publicly declared that they would sell their shoes and other articles for what they had previously charged if the price of their raw materials and household commodities remained stable.[29]

Skilled craftsmen resisted controls in Boston, too. The public denunciation of Sarson Belcher, a hat maker, for having sold above the ceiling price brought a united protest from all the hatters. When the authorities remained firm before this concerted opposition and threatened to punish all the hatters as violators of price regulations, the tradesmen held their ground and were accordingly denounced along with Belcher, whom they defended as helping to ease the hat shortage.[30]

Even among the well-disciplined Moravians there was some op-

position to wage ceilings. In April, 1778, a Salem Conference adjusted wages at 4 shillings a day for the single brethren. The Conference acknowledged that no one could "become rich or have an easy time" on this income, but added that neither wealth nor ease was the object of "living together in a congregation." On the day following the announcement, twelve of the brethren left their work with "the godless intention" of forcing "a larger increase in their wages, and to make the officials dance to their piping." The Moravian leaders saw the walkout "with sorrow, but believed that the congregation would support those in authority," as indeed it did. To everyone's relief, the young men soon returned to work, "very much ashamed of their outbreak," for which they were earnestly censured and suspended from certain church services.[31]

All workers were not employed by private enterprise. Some artificers toiled for the continental and state armed forces, or for their manufacturing establishment; but as a rule, these workers did not fare as well as employees in private enterprise. The latter were better paid and not subject to military law. It was precisely to obtain a cheap and dependable labor supply that companies of artisans were recruited and organized in their own little hierarchies. Inducements for joining such companies or for working on state or continental projects varied during the Revolution. In 1778, Pennsylvania offered to teamsters enlisting for three years a bounty of twenty dollars, a suit of clothes per year, £6 Pennsylvania currency per month, one ration a day, and a great coat and a pair of boots. The following year the Massachusetts Board of Works advertised for a number of carpenters, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, armorers, sadlers, harness or shoemakers, gun stockers, tanners, and nail makers, who were promised for three years of service, a bounty of two hundred dollars, a monthly wage of sixty dollars, a suit of clothes per year, one and a half rations a day, and "every encouragement" allowed the troops. Toward the end of the war New York was offering wages payable in specie and a month's pay in advance.[32]

These seemingly substantial incentives for long term enlistment in non-combatant units of the armed forces had two serious disadvantages—the pay was fixed at the time of enlistment, and both the "National government" and the states were exceedingly poor paymasters. As a result, artisans in government service had to petition time and again for wage adjustments and back earnings. On the eve of peace a group of artillery workers complained that for two years they had received only their nominal pay, a pittance indeed in the light of current prices. Three years after the war army breadmakers were still asking compensation for work performed during the war. The petitions of the munition makers told the same

story. Some of their group informed Congress in 1782 that they had received nothing for nine months; their families were starving and they were daily being threatened with eviction for nonpayment for rent and taxes.[33]

Virginia's credit standing was so poor that many artisans refused to work for that state, thus forcing the authorities to resort to wage bargaining. The employees at the state gun factory in Fredericksburg were ready for a general walkout in 1781 because their wages were paid in paper at the rate of five hundred to one of specie, while their expenses for food and other necessities had to be met at the unfavorable rate of six hundred, eight hundred, and even a thousand to one.[34]

Privateering, a lucative business, caused the labor shortage in the maritime areas to be still more acute. No public ship could be manned, no continental battallion could be filled, no farm laborer could be hired, as long as a privateer was in search of a crew. Fortunately, if the need for manpower became sufficiently urgent the authorities could refuse clearance to the privateers.[35]

The government's tardiness in making payments may have had something to do with the poor quality and the high cost of many commodities, especially shoes and clothing, made for or sold to the government. Some shoes were found to be so bad that they could not stand one day's wear. The "Great Fraud" and "Deceit" perpetrated by some New Hampshire contractors for army shoes accounted for a law providing that all shoes sold to the army bear the mark of the maker on the soles; if the shoes failed to pass inspection they were to be sold at auction and the manufacturer fined four shillings per shoe.[36]

In the three-sided relationship between employer, employee, and public the first and last of these groups were much more articulate than the second, whose statements were generally confined to petitions for higher wages or back pay. The public generally concluded that labor did not take undue advantage of its favorable bargaining position during the Revolution. Public rancor was directed far more against the speculators, "greedy merchants," and irresponsible army purchasing agents than against labor.[37] On the other hand, employers complained not only of the wages they had to pay, but also of the quality of work they received, and quartermasters harped on the rapaciousness and unreliability of teamsters and other workers with whom they came into contact.

Undoubtedly, labor took advantage of the manpower shortage. Still, the increased employment of women and children and the use of prisoners of war and slaves to perform private and public work did not give labor a clear field. Toward the end of the Revolution

some workers viewed with alarm the return of peace and normal economic conditions, but in such cases they were probably forgetting that if wages were higher than they had been at the start of the Revolution, the same was true of prices.

FOOTNOTES

[1] *Independent Chronicle and Universal Advertiser* (Boston) June 26, 1777.

[2] For Labor conditions on the eve and during the Revolution see Carl Bridenbaugh, ed., "Patrick M'Robert's Tour Through Part of the North Provinces of America," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LIX (1935), 135-180; Richard B. Morris, *Government and Labor in Early America* (New York, 1946); Anne Bezanson, *Prices and Inflation During the American Revolution, Pennsylvania, 1770-1790* (Philadelphia, 1952).

[3] Peter Force, Comp., *American Archives* (8 Vols., Washington, 1837-1858), 4th ser., I, 1256-1258, II, 140-144, III, 820-821; Woolsey and Salmon to George Salmon, Dec. 8, 1775, Woolsey and Salmon Letterbook, Library of Congress; Bezanson, *Prices*, 17.

[4] Force, Comp., *Archives*, 4th ser., I, 1001-1002, 1169-1172, 1226-1227, II, 13-14, 170-172, 865; *North Carolina Gazette* (New Bern) Apr. 7, Feb. 24, 1775; John L. Bishop, *A History of American Manufacture from 1608 to 1860* (2 Vols., Philadelphia, 1864) I, 579; *Pennsylvania Packet* (Philadelphia), May 13, 1776.

[5] Force, comp., *Archives*, 4th ser., I, 1339, II, 387-388, 563-564, III, 1081-1082, 1291, 1424-1426, IV, 71-73, 218, 517, 726, 730-732, 740, 1052-1053, 1071-1072, 1104-1105, 1304, 1572; *Minutes of the Provincial Congress and the Council of Safety of the State of New Jersey* (Trenton, 1879), 159-160, 230, 440-442, 466; Broadside Collection (Library of Congress), Oct. 31, 1775, Port 38, no. 28a.

[6] Hezekiah Niles, *Principles and Acts of the Revolution* (New York, 1876), 211-212.

[7] Force, comp., *Archives*, 4th ser., II, 1791, III, 1116; *Pa. Packet*, Sept. 24, 1776; Dixon's *Virginia Gazette*, Dec. 13, 1776, Feb. 7, May 16, June 20, 1777; Charles Dick to Jefferson, Jan. 4, 1781, Julian P. Boyd, *et. al.*, eds., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (19 vols., 1950--), IV, 308.

[8] Morris, *Government and Labor*, 291-294; *Journals of Continental Congress, 1774-1789* (Washington, 34 vols., 1904-1939) IV, 103, 147-148; "Excerpts from Day-Books of David Evans. . . ," *Pa. Mag. of Hist. and Biog.*, XXVII (1903), 49.

[9] *State Records of North Carolina* (26 vols., Goldsboro, 1886-1907) XI, 467-468; William W. Hening, *Statutes at Large* (13 vols., New York, 1823), X, 335.

[10] "Avis au public," Philadelphia, 1778, Broadside, New York Public Library; Force, comp., *Archives*, 4th ser., II, 1342; *Pa. Packet*, Apr. 22, 1776; Dixon's *Va. Gaz.* June 22, Jul. 29, 1776, Nov. 7, 1777.

[11] Edward Burd to J. Burd, May 26, 1777, Lewis B. Walker, ed., *The Burd Papers* (Pottsville, 1899), 95; Jacob C. Parsons, ed., *Extracts from the Diary of Jacob Hiltzheimer of Philadelphia, 1765-1798*, (Philadelphia, 1893) 41; Richard Claiborne to Jefferson, *Calendar of Virginia State Papers, and other Manuscripts* . . . (11 vols., Richmond 1875-1893), Feb. 2, 1781; I, 483; James Wood to Jefferson, Feb. 3, 1781, *ibid.*, I, 486; Charles Carroll to Richard Peters, Oct. 22, 1777, "Two Letters of Charles Carroll," *Pa. Mag. of Hist. and Biog.*, XXVIII (1904), 216.

[12] Michael Hillegas to Matthias Slough, May 9, 1780, "Selected Letters of Michael Hillegas, Treasurer of the United States," *Pa. Mag. of Hist. and Biog.*, XXIX (1905), 239; Jefferson to and from Joseph Holmes, Mar. 7, 1871, Boyd, eds., *Jefferson Papers*, V, 84-85.

[13] J. Reuben Clark, Jr., comp., *Emergency Legislation, Passed Prior to December, 1913* (Washington, 1918), 280-283, 879-885, 886; Thomas Newton to George Muter, Feb. 16, 1781, *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, III, 229; Force, comp., *Archives*, 4th ser., IV, 85.

[14] St. George Tucker to Mrs. Tucker, July 11, 1781, *Tucker-Coleman Papers* (Earl Swim Library, Williamsburg); Elizabeth (Sandwith) Drinker, *Extracts from the Journal of Elizabeth Drinker, 1759-1807* (Philadelphia, 1889) 69-70, 109, 113, 124; John F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, in the Olden Time* (Philadelphia, 1857), I, 176.

[15] Clark, *Emergency Legislation*, 981, 983; Bishop, *Manufactures*, 391-393; Force, comp., *Archives*, 4th ser., IV, 1222; *Minutes of Provincial Congress and Council of Safety of N.J.*, 543; *Minutes of the Council of Safety of the State of New Jersey* (Jersey City, 1872), 186, 215; George Muter to Jefferson, Feb. 13, 1781, Boyd, eds., *Jefferson Papers*, IV, 601; Jefferson to William Call, Apr. 13, 1781, *ibid.*, V, 413; Petitions, Apr. 12, July 24, 1777, Papers of Continental Congress, No. 42, I, 41, 45; *Pa. Packet* (L), May 6, 1778; *Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser* (Philadelphia), June 25, 1777; *Connecticut Courant* (Hartford), Feb. 17, Apr. 14, 1778.

[16] *Council of Safety of N.J.*, 185; Force, comp., *Archives*, 4th ser., III, 580, 669; Charles Dick to Jefferson, Apr. 5, 1781, Boyd, eds., *Jefferson Papers*, V, 355.

[17] Bezanson, *Prices and Inflation*, 168; Harrietta M. Forbes, ed., *The Diary of Rev. Ebenezer Parkman of Westborough, Mass.* (Westborough, 1899), 274

[18] Cornelius Harnett to William Wilkinson, Oct. 10, 23, 1777, *State Records of N.C.*, XI, 780-781, 785-786. Iron workers were also scarce in North Carolina. Samuel Spencer to Governor Caswell, Aug. 15, 1777, *ibid.*, 575-578.

[19] Morris, *Government and Labor*, 1-54.

[20] *Ibid.*, 55-91.

[21] *Ibid.*, 92-135; Elizabeth Cometti, "Regulation of Prices," unpublished manuscript.

[22] *Records of Connecticut*, I, 607-620; Bezanson, *Prices and Inflation*, 311-317.

[23] Bezanson, *Prices and Inflation*, 36, 47, 168, 314; Morris, *Government and Labor*, 211.

[24] Schuyler Papers, Army Contracts, New York Public Library. Clark, *Emergency Legislation*, 835-850; *Pa. Packet*, Aug. 31, 1779.

[25] Clark, *Emergency Legislation*, 420-421, 429; *Providence Gazette*, Oct. 2, 1779.

[26] Bezanson, *Prices and Inflation*, 293; *Pa. Packet*, Dec. 31, 1777; Clark, *Emergency Legislation*, 729-731.

[27] Elizabeth Cometti, "Inflation in Revolutionary Maryland," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., VIII (1951), 228-234; Hooe and Harrison Journal, 1779-1782, New York Public Library.

[28] *N.J. Gazette*, Mar. 11, 1778.

[29] *Pa. Packet*, July 15, 20, 1779; Bezanson, *Prices and Inflation*, 314.

[30] *Boston Town Records, 1778-1783*, 87, 97; Richard B. Morris, "Labor and Mercantilism in the Revolutionary Era," Richard B. Morris, ed., *The Era of the American Revolution*, (New York, 1939), 129-130.

[31] Adelaide L. Fries, ed., *Records of the Moravians* (4 vols., Raleigh, 1926, 1930), III, 1225-1227, 1259.

[32] *Pa. Packet*, Jan. 28, May 6, 1778; *The Continental Journal and Weekly Advertiser*, (Boston) Sept. 2, 1779; *New York Packet, Supplement* Apr. 25, 1782; "Proceedings of the Provincial Congress . . . Relating to Military Matters," Berthold Fernow, ed., *New York in the Revolution* (Albany, 1887), I, 61.

[33] Memorials and Petitions, Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 41, I, 25; No. 42, I, 19; No. 42, II, 64; No. 42, III, 15; No. 42, IV, 44; No. 41, IV, 55.

[34] John Peyton to Col. William Davies, Aug. 10, 1781, *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, II, 309; Charles Dick to Col. Davies, Sept. 10, 15, 1781, *ibid.*, II, 411, 439-440.

[35] Richard F. Upton, *Revolutionary New Hampshire* (Hanover, 1936), 110-113; *Providence Gaz.*, July 1, 1780.

[36] George Elliott to Col. Muter, Jan. 31, 1781; William Armstead to Col. Davies, Jan. 3, 1781; Col. Davies to Jefferson, Feb. 1, 1781, *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, I, 476, 414, 481; *Acts and Laws of New Hampshire*, Apr. 7, 1781, 237-238.

[37] Morris, "Labor and Mercantilism," Morris, eds., *Era of the American Revolution*, 132-133.

"THERE OUGHT TO BE NO DISTINCTION:" THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND THE POWERLESS

By
Jerome H. Wood, Jr.

The attack on the consensus interpretation of the American past, launched by the so-called "New Left" historians in the 1960's, was made largely in an effort to rescue from oblivion the actions and ideas of the ordinary people in our history. Insofar as the American Revolution is concerned, the new goal was to view that great event "from the bottom up," to chronicle the effects on non-elite groups of successive British measures after 1763, to comprehend the radicals' response to these measures, to discern the concerns and expectations that lay behind popular behavior in the midst of the crisis, and, ultimately, to understand the character of the Revolutionary process and settlement by evaluating them from the perspective of the expectations of ordinary people.[1] The scholars who invited their colleagues to study the winning of independence from this new point of view were prompted by a humanitarian faith, by an assumption "that all men are created equal, and rational, and that since they can think and reason they can make their own history."[2]

Of course, there was nothing new about a concern with ordinary folk in relation to the birth of the nation. An earlier generation of "Progressive" historians, stressing the dual character of the Revolution as a struggle to gain home rule and to determine who should rule at home, emphasized the unfranchised, subjected to the rule of a wealthy elite interested primarily in its own well being, denied economic opportunity by "the constricting hand of monopoly," barred from becoming free simple yeomen farmers by the laws of primogeniture and entail as well as the engrossing appetities of landlords and speculators, and prevented from making a new start in the West by the Proclamation of 1763, the "dispossessed" of the colonies fought to establish a democratic order.[3] There was, in this older interpretation, an assumption that those on the bottom of American society had been important actors in the movement for independence. The "proletarian element," as one adherent to this approach expressed it, "was not inclined by temperament to that self restraint in moments of popular protest which was ever the *arrière pensée* of the merchant class; and being for the most part unfranchised, they expressed their sentiments most naturally through boisterous mass meetings and mob demonstrations."[4] Success was

said to have attended their efforts. The extension of the suffrage, the elimination of impediments to partial inheritance, and the distribution of land made possible by the confiscation of Loyalist estates, the attacks on, and partial success in the elimination of, slavery—all were achievements gained for the common man in a levelling democracy.[5]

It was not, then, their concern for ordinary people in the American Revolution that marked the originality of the radical historians but rather the intensity of their focus and elaboration. Rather than present the views and actions of common people through the prism of their "superiors'" perceptions, historians should let them speak for themselves. "Having determined the place of those who were ruled in the ideology of those who ruled, [the new approach would] study the conduct and ideology of the people on the bottom: this is nothing less than an attempt to make the inarticulate speak."[6] Bristling at the claim that the revolutionaries fought to preserve a social order rather than to create a new one—the principal argument of the consensus school that had dominated the historiography of early America since the 1950s—the dissenting historians demanded a study of "the powerless, the inarticulate, the poor." Strongly implicit in this perspective was an assumption that, having undertaken the search, historians would be rewarded by the discovery of competing revolutionary ideologies, something other than the "Real Whig" brand of republicanism recently stressed as the intellectual context and dynamic of the Revolution; perhaps they would even find evidence of rebellion against the Revolution's elite leaders.[7]

A review of the literature on the Revolutionary era published in the last decade suggests that few historians have accepted the challenge.[8] For the most part, the attitudes and actions of the "inarticulate" must be ferreted out from discussions of political, social, and economic matters not directly focused on them. Indeed, at least one distinguished authority has dared even to reassert a consensus view. "In sum," he maintains, "the evidence of Revolutionary class conflict is scanty, and for good reason. With a majority of laborers in chains and with the most discontented freemen venting their discontent in loyalism, the struggle over who should rule at home was unlikely to bear many of the marks of class conflict. Class conflict was indubitably present, but it did not surface with an effective intensity until a later day, after the Revolution had built a consensus that could both nourish and contain it, and after social, political, and economic change had produced greater provocations to it."[9]

Even the studies devoted specifically to the "inarticulate" of the Revolutionary era have not led uniformly to the conclusions that

might have been expected in light of the dissenting historians' suggestions. In an article on "Philadelphia's White Oaks," a fraternity of eighteenth century ship carpenters, James H. Hutson paints the picture of a group of workingmen who, far from being alienated from their society and its values, were "ambitious and achievement oriented; they were affirmative about their society; they wanted to make their way up in it and share in the bounty which it bestowed." Inclined to lend their support to men of their own background who had "made it," they joined with Benjamin Franklin in the movement to bring royal government to Pennsylvania and came to the rescue of John Hughes, the Pennsylvania stamp distributor and a former baker, when he was threatened with physical abuse. The White Oaks joined with their fellow mechanics in support of the nonimportation movement for reasons both principled and pecuniary; the embargo on British goods could serve as a means of applying political pressure on Parliament, but it was as well "a blessing for their little businesses, a wonderful opportunity for them to get ahead."[10]

What is to be concluded? Were the historians who pointed the way to a new dimension of the Revolution only conductors to a dead end? Is their faith in the presence of a revolutionary ideology among the denied sectors of the population chimerical? To assume the impossibility of an open road is, however, to act prematurely. There is still an opportunity and a necessity to ask questions which will yield useful results. What is needed first, however, are clearer definitions and an appreciation of the nature and effects of social change and political development in pre-Revolutionary America.

The directive to tell the story of the Revolution "from the bottom up" was, unfortunately, accompanied by no clear definition of just who constituted the suggested object of study. In what is widely regarded as a clarion call for the new approach, Jesse Lemisch implicitly grouped together into a single category employees, sailors, "the powerless," and "those who were ruled."[11] But surely such classifications and comparisons are too broad and too vague to be useful; moreover, excepting perhaps the case of the sailors, they are not strictly synonymous with horizontal layers of colonial society. For example, should farmers and urban dwellers of middling status who possessed enough property to qualify to vote in provincial or local elections, be regarded as among the powerful? Were such people in a position to make determinative decisions about the distribution and use of society's resources? If judged to be "powerless," should they—in light of their status as property owners and voters—be put into the same conceptual category as sailors or slaves? Moreover, if we were to take as one and the same "those who were ruled" and

those on the bottom, we would be in the position of having to study the vast majority of early Americans, most of whom had a social and economic status that was sufficiently high to make comparison with the equally non-ruling recipients of poor relief and slaves inappropriate. It seems more useful to do what Lemisch does, in fact, at other places in his writings; that is, to direct attention to more specific, circumscribed groups who were clearly among the unprivileged part of the population, such as Negroes (slave and free), unfranchised whites, seamen or the destitute.

If there was a certain vagueness as to just who constituted the bottom of early American society, historians clearly misstated these people's capacity to express their grievances, in the notion that they were somehow "inarticulate." No one who has read the petitions for relief directed at colonial and early national legislatures by slaves, voteless or unrepresented whites, and the poor could believe that the petitioners were mute, dumb, or incapable of "the normal articulation of understandable speech." Here is a petition of May, 1774, directed to Governor Thomas Gage of Massachusetts by "a Grate Number of Blackes of the Province... held in a state of Slavery within a free and Christian Country:"[12]

> Your Petitioners apprehind we have in common with all other men a natural right to our freedoms without Being depriv'd of them by our fellow men as we are a freeborn Pepel and have never forfeited this Blessing by aney compact or agreement whatever. But we were unjustly dragged by the cruel hand of power from our dearest frinds and some of us stolen from the bosoms of our tender Parents and from a Populous Pleasant and plentiful country and Brought hither to be made slaves for Life in a Christian land.... There is a great number of us sencear... members of the Church of Christ how can the master and the slave be said to fulfil that command Live in love let Brotherly love contuner and abound Beare yea onenothers Bordenes. How can the master be said to Beare my Borden when he Beares me down which the... chanes of slavery.

How eloquently these supplicants urged the abolition of slavery! It was not their inarticulateness that defined those on the bottom of American society. It was their lack of freedom, their poverty, their character as victims of discriminatory economic and social legislation, and, perhaps most importantly, their lack of means to participate effectively in normal electoral and political processes, which forced them on occasion to the only political arena open to them—the street.

The attempt to define just who was on the bottom of early American society forces us to look at the changing nature of that society. To approach the problem in terms of social change can provide a picture not only of the nature of the unprivileged groups but also a suggestion as to their number and proportion within the population and a context in which to view their responses to the events of the Revolutionary era. Recent research on the changing social structure of early America permits us to appreciate the reality of, and to understand the nature of, a dispossessed class among the colonists. In major urban centers, in minor ones, and in the rural sections of the provinces, the picture is slowly emerging of growing economic and social stratification, as measured by the distribution of wealth and property and the appearance, for the first time in some places, of designations calculated to set those at the apex of their societies apart from the rest. In Boston, Massachusetts, for example, between 1687 and 1771 there has been noted "a growing inequality of the distribution of wealth among the propertied segments of the community," and "exclusiveness and predominance of a mercantile elite." Moreover, in the former year 14 per cent of the adult male population were neither owners of taxable property nor dependents in a household assessed for the property tax. By the eve of the Revolution, 29 per cent of Boston's adult males were without property. Forming no monolithic proletarian class, however, the propertyless bottom of Boston society consisted of "a congeries of social and occupational groups with a highly transient maritime element at one end of the spectrum and a more stable and respected artisan segment at the other."[13] Elsewhere in Massachusetts a notable rise in transiency mobility appeared in the form of a class of "strolling poor" requiring economic assistance. These wandering dependents came from the bottom of the social scale and forced the colony (later the state) to develop new solutions to social welfare and control.[14]

The middle colonies too, provide significant evidence of increasing stratification as the region developed. In Lancaster, Pennsylvania, a minor urban center and the largest inland town in the British mainland colonies, there was growing disparity in the distribution of wealth. In 1751, the poorest 30 per cent of the heads of families possessed 13 per cent of the community's assessed taxable wealth, while the wealthiest 10 per cent of the heads of families controlled 33 per cent. With the passage of time, the gap between rich and poor widened. In 1778, the poorest 30 per cent of the heads of families in the borough accounted for only 2.5 per cent of the assessed taxable wealth, but the most affluent 10 per cent accrued nearly one-half. There was a significant number of propertyless men in town as well, with the tenancy rate fluctuating between 26 and 35 per cent of the

heads of families between 1756 and 1788.[15] A study of the distribution of wealth in nearby Chester County over the course of the eighteenth century concludes that "the comparatively open society, operating in a stable, pre-industrial economic environment, encumbered with few governmental restraints, and subscribing to a liberal ideology . . . led to increasing social stratification. . . ."[16]

For all of its importance, increasing concentration of wealth was merely one of a number of social changes that American society underwent in the years prior to the Revolution. Colonial America was transformed into a society characterized by increasing population growth and density (which brought with it the exhaustion of undivided, cultivable lands in many places), increasing migration (including itinerant labor), and increasing commercialization (which brought with it a geographic concentration of wealth).[17] Among the effects of these dangers, which some scholars describe as the "Europeanization" of early American society, was the introduction of an element of human instability into the American social order, the appearance of a "lumpen-proletariat" of propertyless men—mostly seamen, laborers, or journeymen artisans—who bargained their services for wages. Unrestrained, for the most part, by the bounds of family government, this peripatetic part of the population, drifting, often unemployed, despised, was responsible for much of the violence in the eighteenth century urban centers.[18]

Clearly, then, there were many colonists who did not enjoy that "pleasing uniformity of decent competence" which Hector St. Jean de Crevecoeur ascribed to the American. How did these dependent classes of the colonies respond to their situation? Did their debased position in society find expression through political activity? To be sure, historians of early American society have only begun to explore the relation between social structure and political behavior, but there exists suggestive evidence, and at least one study, that are relevant to this question. It should be kept in mind that the kind of people under scrutiny here—the unemployed, men without property, the voteless, and the unfree—were denied access to the normal channels of political expression. Consequently, they were forced to make their plight known through collective and disruptive action, especially riot and rebellion. During the 1760's in New York, for example, tenants who purchased Indian tracts which their landlords had acquired fraudulently, combined in an anti-rent movement that pitted them against sheriffs attempting to carry out eviction orders; the struggle brought them into confrontation with a judicial system biased in favor of the landed magnates.[19] In the seaport towns, unemployed dock and shipyard workers caused disturbances, and seamen—angered and frightened by the press gangs of the British

Navy—joined with merchants and others in violent acts of resistance in the name of freedom and as an encouragement to trade. The workers of colonial America who were outside of the class system because they were unfree—slaves and indentured servants—acted collectively within their group and sometimes jointly in rebelling simply to achieve their liberation or in retaliation for harsh usage.[20]

Although mob action and rebellion constituted the most readily available and the characteristic outlet for the expression of grievances by the depressed members of colonial society, the evolving political processes in the urban centers offered another channel that came to be used increasingly. In the half-century prior to the Revolutionary crisis, a radical mode of politics emerged in such places as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, the result of a transformation which involved "activation of previously quiescent lower class elements." These activities included the organization of political clubs, caucuses and tickets, the involvement of the clergy and the churches in politics, and the organization of mobs and violence for political ends. Ironically, this introduction of new, lower-status groups into public life was encouraged by strong and competing elites in need of reinforcement; and the results of their action were a broadened spectrum of individuals participating in public affairs and the encouragement of a non-deferential political culture—anti-authoritarian, sometimes violent, and often destructive of elite values.[21] Insofar as lower class participation in the mob activity that was a part of the new urban politics is concerned, manipulation by elites, rather than spontaneous activity in behalf of class interests, appears most often to have been the energizing force.[22] Nonetheless, the elites' courtship of low status groups represented an implicit levelling, the suggestion of a kind of equality, that provided, along with the social changes and tensions of the period, a significant context in which the unprivileged classes received the revolutionary ideology.

The fateful thirteen years that followed the close of the French and Indian War were seasons of protest, reflection, and action not only for the elites who directed the revolutionary movement but for the powerless groups of America as well. If the merchants and lawyers had reasons to react strongly to British measures after 1763, groups of low status responded in their own ways to these policies and to the retaliatory programs of American leaders. Surely, the poor and the powerless had grievances of their own. Corrupt customs officials seized the smallest woodboats engaged in purely local trade; the chests of common seamen were rifled and their contents confiscated. The British Army was the cause of discontent for more than one reason: troops were frequently quartered in the houses of the protesting poor, and the soldiers, allowed to engage in civilian em-

ployment when not on duty, competed with Americans for work at less than the prevailing wage rate. Impressment of hapless Americans by the Royal Navy, a long-standing grievance, sometimes produced violent outbursts, as in the Boston Massacre and the Battle of Golden Hill in New York City.[23] The response of American leadership to these and other provocations sometimes met with resistance from those on the bottom of society. The boycott strategy used to force the repeal of the Stamp Act worked to the detriment of the destitute and the hungry as well as of prisoners whose release could not be secured as long as the legal process was halted. In Maryland, the non-importation movement which followed the enactment of the Coercive Acts led to economic stagnation and depression, evoking complaints from farmers and threats to "mob the merchants." In Charles and Baltimore counties, indeed, mobs stormed the jails and released men who had been imprisoned for debt. Unable to meet their financial obligations, debtors in Charles County forced a closing of the courts.[24]

In their war of propaganda and pressure against the British, American radicals found it convenient to enlist the support of low status groups. The Sons of Liberty, for example, believing in the necessity of involving "the Body of the People," sought to attract all elements of the population to their mass meetings and other activities. Often, men of the middling ranks who had risen to their positions from less respectable levels, utilized their past experiences and wooed their old comrades in the radical cause.[25] Once absorbed into the movement, however, those from below sometimes proved incapable of being controlled by their middle class leaders. In January, 1774, a Boston crowd composed mainly of seamen seized a customs official long charged with "venality and corruption as well as . . . extortion in office." Mindful of the way in which "the law" had dealt with Captain Thomas Preston and his soldiers following the Boston Massacre, the mob ignored the insistence of their "leaders" that established legal practice must be followed and proceeded to tar and feather their victim.[26]

What becomes abundantly clear from an analysis of the behavior of low status groups in the revolutionary movement is that their resentment and discontent were directed not exclusively against the British but toward American leadership as well. The criticisms of the various boycott strategies and the affair of the Boston customs official reveal a determination on the part of these colonists to support only those retaliatory measures that were not detrimental to their livelihood. Their actions, moreover, reveal a distrust of established legal and political institutions. Gouverneur Morris for all his wrongheadedness, was absolutely right: "the mob" had begun

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to think and reason for itself. By no means slow to arrive at this perception, the elite leaders of the revolutionary movement soon placed a new emphasis upon internal restraint. "These tarrings and featherings," complained John Adams in 1774, "this breaking open of houses by rude and insolent Rabbles, in Resentment for private Wrongs or in pursuance of private Prejudices and Passions, must be discountenanced." In short, the people must not get ahead of their leaders. Or, as Governor Thomas Hutchinson unequivocally expressed it: "The spirit of liberty spread where it was not intended."[27]

Acting on their own, or in collaboration with elite radical leadership, "the mobile" behaved in an ideological context that simultaneously justified their immediate deeds and encouraged them to expect a change in their circumstances. Having heard their "betters" proclaim a desire for liberty, and having listened to and even joined with them in asserting their "natural rights" they used these concepts to formulate their own demands. They were aided immeasurably by the egalitarian implications not only of the Declaration of Independence but of that most widely known of revolutionary pamphlets, Thomas Paine's *Common Sense:* "Where there are no distinctions, there can be no superiority; perfect equality affords no temptation."[28] Here was a goal for the poor, a theology for the slave, a platform for the voteless. For a few, the egalitarian notions implicit in this and other literature of the revolutionary era provided a credo for radical action, which often took the form of attacks on private property and on the traditional mechanisms of social control. In May, 1775, a deposition presented to one county court on the eastern shore of Maryland recorded that a wheelwright refused to attend a militia muster because he understood that "the gentlemen were intending to make us all fight for their lands and Negroes" and then said "damn them (meaning the gentlemen) if I had a few more white people to join me I could get all the Negroes in the County to back us and they would do more good in the night than the white people could do in the day. . . ." He further averred that they could find ammunition and that "if all the gentlemen were killed we should have the best of the land to tend and besides could get money enough while they were about it as they have got all the money in their hands."[29] By the summer of 1776, indeed, poor whites, Negroes, and loyalists on the eastern shore of Maryland were rebelling against the revolutionary leaders, and on June 28th a reluctant provincial convention both voted independence and dispatched troops to the scene of trouble.[30]

Expectations as to what the Revolution might accomplish were doubtless almost as numerous as colonists. But the low status groups certainly perceived the Revolution as affording the oppor-

tunity to acquire land (either in already settled areas or in the West), to gain political rights, and—in the case of slaves and servants—to be free. The desire for political democracy—as represented by simple rather than complex governments, universal manhood suffrage, and the elimination of property qualifications for office holding—was probably the most important goal since it could be a means to securing the other objectives. For some, independence would hopefully mean the right simply to be left alone, as a horrified Landon Carter bemoaned in sending along this definition of "Independency" to his friend George Washington: "It was expected to be a form of Government that, by being independent of the rich men, every man would then be able to do as he pleased."[31]

For the African slave, the revolutionary ideology seemed to bear a promise of freedom. Surely the liberty which Washington, Jefferson, and other American Whigs demanded for themselves could be claimed by those who were truly in bondage. To be certain, it was no new thing for slaves to make supplication for their freedom. Even prior to the Revolution, they brought suits against masters who restrained them of their liberty and petitioned legislatures "to be liberated from a State of Slavery." The philosophy expressed in the opening passages of the Declaration of Independence was a powerful engine which they could use, negatively or positively, to drive home the contradiction between their own debased status and "a land gloriously contending for the sweets of freedom" or simply to challenge the right of one man to hold another.[32] For many thralls, service in the state forces or, more characteristically, in the Continental lines, was the pathway to liberation. And the very names adopted by some of the sable soldiers—Cuff Liberty, Dick Freedom, Jube Freeman, or Juperter Free—were as clear an indication of their motivation and ideology as could be found anywhere. Although they had no particular fondness for monarchy or the British troops, many slaves, pursuing freedom in whatever quarter it seemed to beckon, voluntarily sought refuge behind His Majesty's lines.[33]

Despite the threatened attacks on private property and the occasional calls for levelling, the demands of the poor, the voteless, and the landless were generally not of such a nature that a wholesale remaking for the creation of greater opportunities for mobility within the liberal, open society of eighteenth century America. But the slaves, who petitioned for their freedom, and the quasi-free blacks who sought an end to discriminatory treatment, did demand a new, free, society in which all men would be able to strive without having imposed upon them the restraining handicap of race. If any single concept may be said to have animated the dispossessed classes in the era of the Revolution it was the idea of equality, not literally

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defined and precisely distributed but realized in respect for the dignity of all men. So strong was their belief in equality, so much did they make it the rule by which they judged the behavior of their leaders and more affluent neighbors that they were inclined to react strongly to its denial even in seemingly inconsequential matters. In 1779, at the annual independence day celebration in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, a group of militiamen, "being a little merry," attacked a set of "the chief people in town" who were diverting themselves at a tavern. Noting that the gentlemen were drinking alone, the troops felt insulted and smashed a few windows, they thinking that "there ought to be no distinction but all get drunk together."[34]

For those on the bottom of American society the Revolution brought only a partial fulfillment of their expectations; for some, it was an experience of disappointment. To be sure, there was much in the way of social and political democracy associated with the movement, but in significant ways it offered little or nothing to people in need of much.[35] For the propertyless, the states proved unable and largely unwilling to offer assistance; had the states engaged in land distribution programs they would have had to forego a quick profit and to extend credit, but they were badly in need of cash and offered credit only to purchasers with good security. The confiscation of Loyalist estates benefited few who lacked property; at least three-fourths of the property seized enriched the affluent who alone possessed the credit or capital to purchase it.[36] Portions of the great proprietary and similar tracts did become the possession of former tenants but most of this land was acquired by a mixture of local farmers, new settlers and speculators. Among the soldiers who gained land as a reward for their services or in exchange for their certificates were doubtless some who had not previously owned property. In removing from their legal codes the laws supporting primogeniture and entail, the new states made an important symbolic gesture in the direction of facilitating access to land, but since these ancient restrictions had been largely inoperative they were probably of no real consequence for the propertyless. The greatest potential boon for those without property was the opening of the West. Two hundred thousand people moved onto the new lands from New York to Georgia; for them, advancement into "the garden of America" provided the opportunity not only to become fee-simple yeomen but to find new hope in a revitalized social order which promised a higher standard of living.

It was, of course, no part of the aim of the Revolution's leaders to bring about a redistribution of wealth in America. Nor, for that matter, was this an expectation of those who possessed little or no money. The state of our present knowledge does not permit gen-

eralizations as to how the Revolution affected the lives of particular poor people. But the few studies that treat the social structure of revolutionary America indicate that the tendency towards greater inequality in the distribution of wealth noted prior to 1776 continued—may well, indeed, have been accelerated—thereafter.[37] Allan Kulikoff, in concluding his analysis of post-revolutionary Boston, notes that "Rich and poor were divided by wealth, ascribed status, and segregated living patterns. Individuals could rarely breach a status barrier in fewer than two generations. While social mobility may have been relatively easy for a few immediately after the Revolution, these extraordinary opportunities tended to disappear as population returned to its pre-Revolutionary size. Since political power was monopolized by the wealthy, the poor could only deferentially appeal for aid."[38]

For the majority of African slaves the Revolution was an experience of evanescent expectations. Certainly the implications of the philosophy associated with the winning of national freedom had occasioned examinations and doubts about the institution of slavery and the place of the Negro in American life.[39] It is true that many slaves were manumitted in return for their military services; others were freed as a result of actions taken by conscience-striken masters, or as a consequence of the legislative acts and judicial decisions which either immediately or gradually brought the institution to an end in the northern states.[40] The prohibition of slavery in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 was based mainly on the revolutionary sentiment in favor of freedom and, as such, was an important barometer of blacks; the Revolution affected no change in their status. It is hard to dispute the judgement of one authority: "Ironically enough, America's freedom was the means of giving slavery itself a longer life than it was to have in the British Empire."[41] Even the Negroes who escaped the shackles of bondage in the Revolutionary era found their taste of freedom bitter-sweet at best.[42]

The unfranchised, and those who expected American political institutions to afford equal rights and true majority rule as a result of the Revolution, could take only limited comfort in the event. Most of the new states continued the property requirements for voting which had been universal in the colonial period, although some lowered the amounts demanded. Only four states awarded the franchise to all taxpayers. It is unlikely, therefore, that the number of new voters increased by only a few percentage points.[43] Moreover, the movement for simple republican governments composed of unicameral legislatures failed.[44] Only in the bills of rights which served as preambles to the new state constitutions, in the assurance that the citizen had certain liberties against government, was much of the

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potential criticism of the Revolution's political settlement probably blunted.

A most useful approach to the study of the powerless and the American Revolution is one which takes into account the evolution of the colonial social structure and political institutions. Such a perspective can provide the historian with an understanding of the reality and nature of a significant number of denied Americans—slaves, the voteless, seamen, and the poor—as well as the involvement of at least some of them in the radicalization of pre-Revolutionary politics. From this viewpoint it becomes clear that the Revolution marked not the initiation but rather the acceleration of processes of social and political change which had begun well before its occurrence and which are associated with the modernization of American society. The movement for independence was incomplete in that it did not fully address the condition of the dependent sectors of the population. But the failure of the downtrodden to develop an ideology which challenged the fundamental bases of American life does not negate the value of assessing the Revolution from the standpoint of those on the bottom of society. Indeed it helps us to understand better the goals and concerns of the leaders of that movement, and somewhat ironically, the apparently overwhelming identification with the movement even on the part of those who gained but little from it.

If the Revolution was not altogether liberating, it was surely liberal and apparently promissory. In its promissory quality, it held out the hope of a better future for those whose present was less than happy. In its liberating quality it marked the enshrinement of the privatistic, competitive, "democracy in cupidity"—given classic sanction in Madison's "Federalist Number Ten"—which evolved slowly but steadily during the colonial era at the expense of holistic or otherwise restraining philosophies. Ultimately, these two qualities were incompatible; they produced not the amelioration but rather the exacerbation of social tensions, a heightening of the distinctions between men which has provided the occasion for almost every subsequent debate in American political history.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Jesse Lemisch, "The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up," in Barton Bernstein, ed., *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History* (New York, 1968), 3-45.

[2] *Ibid.*, 29.

[3] Louis M. Hacker, "The American Revolution, Economic Aspects,"

Marxist Quarterly, I (1937), 46-47. Other expressions of this point of view may be found in Carl Becker, *The History of Political Parties in the Province of New York* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1909), Louis M. Hacker, *The Triumph of American Captialism* (New York, 1940) and Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution* (New York, 1918).

[4] Arthur M. Schlesinger, "The American Revolution Reconsidered," *Political Science Quarterly*, XXXIV (1919), 61-78.

[5] J. Franklin Jameson, *The American Revolution Considered As a Social Movement* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1926).

[6] Lemisch, "The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up," 6.

[7] Aside from Lemisch's article cited above, other studies showing this perspective include his "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., XXV (1968), 371-407 and Staughton Lynd, *Class Conflict, Slavery, and the United States Constitution* (Indianapolis, Indiana, 1967).

[8] Among those studies which focus directly on the "inarticulate" during the Revolution are James H. Hutson, "An Investigation of the Inarticulate: Philadelphia's White Oaks," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., XXVIII (1971), 3-26 and Charles S. Olton, "Philadelphia's Merchanics in the First Decade of Revolution, 1765-1775," *Journal of American History*, LIX (1972), 311-26. Other work which has significant bearing on the denied classes and the Revolution includes Merrill Jensen, "The American People and the American Revolution," *ibid.*, LVII (1970), 5-35; Roger Champagne, "New York's Radicals and the Coming of Independence," *ibid.*, XI (1964), 21-39; David C. Skaggs, "Maryland's Impulse Toward Social Revolution," *ibid.*, XIV (1967), 771-86; and Allan Kulikoff, "The Progress of Inequality in Revolutionary Boston," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., XXVIII (1971), 375-412.

[9] Edmund S. Morgan, "Conflict and Consensus in the American Revolution," in Stephen G. Kurtz and James H. Hutson, eds., *Essays on the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1971), 297.

[10] Hutson, "An Investigation of the Inarticulate," *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXVIII, 24-25.

[11] Lemisch, "The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up," 3-29, *passim.*

[12] Sidney Kaplan, *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution* (Greenwich, Connecticut, 1973), 13.

[13] James A. Henretta, "Economic Development and Social Structure in Colonial Boston," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., XXII (1965), 75-92.

[14] Douglas Lamar Jones, "The Strolling Poor: Transiency in Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts," *Journal of Social History*, VIII (1975), 28-49.

[15] See my forthcoming book, *Conestoga Crossroads: Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1730-1790*, to be published by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

[16] James T. Lemon and Gary B. Nash, "The Distribution of Wealth in

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[16] James T. Lemon and Gary B. Nash, "The Distribution of Wealth in

Eighteenth-Century America: A Century of Change in Chester County, Pennsylvania, 1693-1802," *Journal of Social History,* II (1968), 1-24. For the South, David C. Skaggs, "Maryland's Impulse Toward Social Revolution," *Journal of American History,* LIV, 771-86, has important material. For the social structure of the colonies, 1763-1783, see Jackson Turner Main, *The Social Structure of Revolutionary America* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1965).

[17] Kenneth A. Lockridge, "Social Change and the Meaning of the American Revolution," *Journal of Social History,* VI (1973), 403-439.

[18] James A. Henretta, *The Evolution of American Society, 1700-1815* (Lexington, Massachusetts, 1973), ch. 3. See also Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt: Urban Life in America, 1743-1776* (New York, 1955).

[19] Merrill Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation: A History of the American Revolution, 1763-1776* (New York, 1968), 31-32.

[20] Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt,* 114; Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3d Ser., XXV, 387; John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of American Negroes* (New York, 1956), 73, 75, 79, 91-92, 106; Richard B. Morris, *Government and Labor in Early America* (New York, 1946), ch. 3. Lemisch draws attention to the class basis of the impressment riots by pointing out the divergent motivations of seamen and non-seamen participants.

[21] Gary B. Nash, "The Transformation of Urban Politics, 1700-1765," *Journal of American History,* LX (1973), 605-632.

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] Lemisch, "The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up," 21-22; John Shy, *Toward Lexington: The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the American Revolution* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1965), 165.

[24] Skaggs, "Maryland's Impulse Toward Social Revolution," *Journal of American History,* LIV, 781-82.

[25] Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* (New York, 1972), 86-89.

[26] *Ibid.*, 272-73.

[27] *Ibid.*, 274; Jensen, "The American Revolution and the American People," *Journal of American History,* LVII, 21.

[28] Nelson F. Adkins, ed., *Thomas Paine: Common Sense and Other Political Writings* (New York, 1953), 30.

[29] Jensen, "The American Revolution and the American People," *Journal of American History,* LVII, 31.

[30] *Ibid.*, 32.

[31] For the significant, but frustrated attempt to bring political democracy to the new states in the Revolution see Elisha P. Douglass, *Rebels and Democras: The Struggle for Equal Political Rights and Majoriy Rule During the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1955); Jensen, "The American Revolution and the American People," *Journal of American History,* LVII, 30.

[32] Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1961), 38-40, 43-50.

[33] *Ibid.*, 51-52, 115.

[34] *Journal of the Lancaster [Pa.] County Historical Society*, LVIII (1954), 5.

[35] On political democracy and the American Revolution see Merrill Jensen, "Democracy and the American Revolution," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, XX (1957), 321-41.

[36] Jackson Turner Main, *The Sovereign States, 1775-1783* (New York, 1973), 319, 331.

[37] Main, *Social Structure of Revolutionary America*, 286-87; Kulikoff, "The Progress of Inequality in Boston," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., XXVIII, 409-11.

[38] Kulikoff, *Ibid.*, 409.

[39] Bernard Bailyn, ed., *Pamphlets of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1965), 142-50; Winthrop D. Jurdaon, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro* (Chapel Hill, 1968), ch. 9.

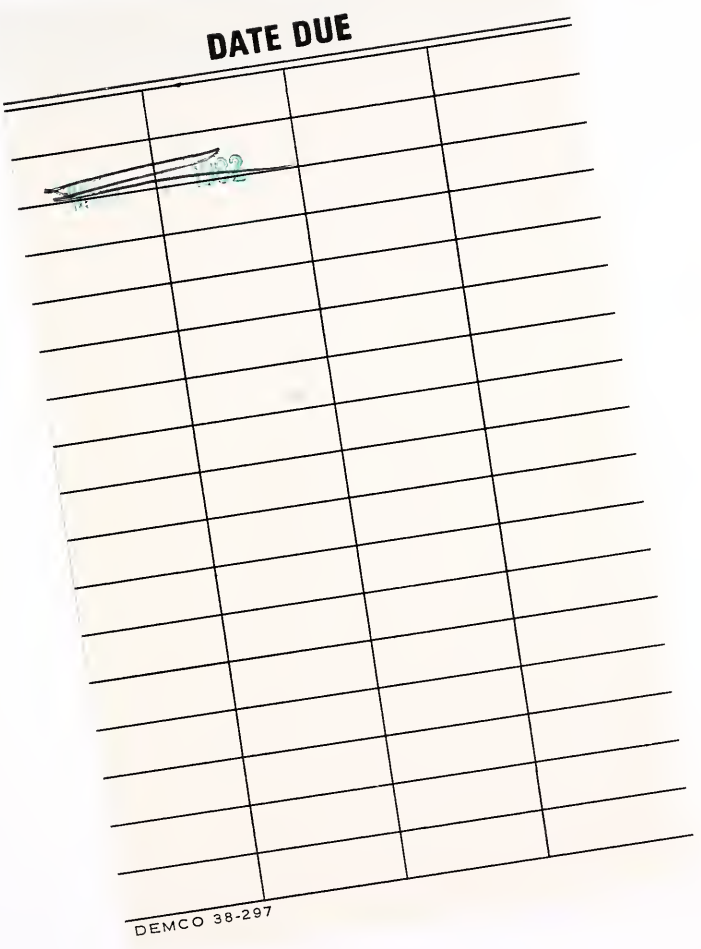
[40] Arthur Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation* (Chicago, 1971).

[41] Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 143.

[42] Leon Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free Staes, 1790-1860.*

[43] Chilton Williamson, *American Suffrage: From Property to Democracy* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1960).

[44] Douglass, *Rebels and Democrats;* Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill, 1969). Wood traces the conservative Whig views on government and bicameralism.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